VALIANT
CHRISTOS GAGE | JOSHUA DYSART | MATT KINDT | PETER MILLIGAN
EMANUELA LUPACCHINO | BART SEARS | LEWIS LAROSA
BLOODSHOT
DELUXE EDITION 2

BLOODSHOT

BOOK TWO

CHRISTOS GAGE | JOSHUA DYSART | MATT KINDT | PETER MILLIGAN
EMANUELA LUPACCHINO | BART SEARS | LEWIS LAROSA

CONTENTS

H.A.R.D. CORPS

RAW MATERIAL
BLOODSHOT #0

THE H.A.R.D. WAY
BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #14-17

Writers: Matt Kindt (#0); and Christos Gage & Joshua Dysart (#14-17)
Artists: ChrisCross (#0), Emanuela Lupacchino and Guillermo Ortego (#14-17), Joseph Cooper and John Lucas (#17)
Colorists: Moose Baumann (#0); Brian Reber (#14-16) with Ian Hannin (#14) and Sotocolor (#16); and Matt Milla (#17)
Letterers: Dave Sharpe (#0, #15-17) and Simon Bowland (#14)
Cover Artists: Dave Bullock (#0); J.G. Jones (#14); Emanuela Lupacchino with Brian Reber (#15); Patrick Zircher with Brian Reber (#16); and Riley Rossmo (#17)

GET SOME!

GET SOME
BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #18-19

RISE AND FALL
BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS: H.A.R.D. CORPS #0

Writers: Christos Gage & Joshua Dysart
Artists: Bart Sears (present day, #18-19); ChrisCross and Víctor Olazaba (flashback #18-19; 1990s sequence, #0); Valentine De Landro (1970s sequence, #0); and Joseph Cooper with Livesay (1980s sequence, #0)
Colorists: Matt Milla (#18-19), Allen Passalaqua (#18), and Ian Hannin (#0)
Letterer: Dave Sharpe
Cover Artists: Clayton Crain (#18-19); and Arturo Lozzi with Ian Hannin (#0)

MISSION: IMPROBABLE

ARCHER & ARMSTRONG #18-19

BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #20-21

Writers: Fred Van Lente (ARCHER & ARMSTRONG); and Christos Gage & Joshua Dysart (BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS)
Artists: Pere Pérez (ARCHER & ARMSTRONG); Tom Raney (BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS); Joseph Cooper with Mark Pennington (BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #21), and Al Barrionuevo (BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #21)
Colorists: David Baron (ARCHER & ARMSTRONG); Gina Going (BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS) with Matt Milla (BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #21)
Letterer: Tom B. Long
Cover Artists: Lewis LaRosa with Matt Milla

BLOODSHOT VS. H.A.R.D. CORPS

BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #22-23

Writers: Duffy Boudreau & Christos Gage
Artists: Al Barrionuevo (#22-23) with Brian Level (#23)
Colorists: Matt Milla (#22-23) with Allen Passalaqua (#23)
Letterer: Dave Sharpe
Cover Artists: Lewis LaRosa (#22) and Al Barrionuevo (#23)

THE GLITCH AND OTHER TALES

SLEEPERS

BLOODSHOT #24

BLOODSHOT #25

Writers: B. Clay Moore (#24), Duane Swierczynski (#25), Peter Milligan (#25), Daniel Kibblesmith (#25), Duffy Boudreau (#25), and Justin Jordan (#25)
Writer/Artist: Howard Chaykin (#25)
Artists: Will Rosado (#24), Bart Sears (#25), Lewis LaRosa (#25), Jay Fabares (#25), Manuel Garcia (#25), Al Barrionuevo (#25), Johnnie Christmas (#25), and Rafer Roberts (#25)
Colorists: Allen Passalaqua (#24-25), Brian Reber (#25), Jesus Aburto with Arturo Albores (#25), Alejandro Arbona (#25), and Jordan Boyd (#25) with Arturo Albores (#25), and Jordan Boyd (#25)
Letterers: Dave Sharpe (#24-25) and Ken Bruzenak (#25)
Letterer and Designer: Dylan Todd (#25)
Cover Artists: Rafa Sandoval with Jordi Tarragona and David Garcia Cruz (#24); and Lewis LaRosa with Brian Reber (#25)

GALLERY

Al Barrionuevo
Moose Baumann
Clayton Crain
ChrisCross
Manuel Garcia
Stefano Gaudiano
Edwin Huang
Matt Kindt
Dave Lanphear
Lewis LaRosa
Emanuela Lupacchino
Dave McCaig
Don Perlin
Bart Sears
Jim Zub

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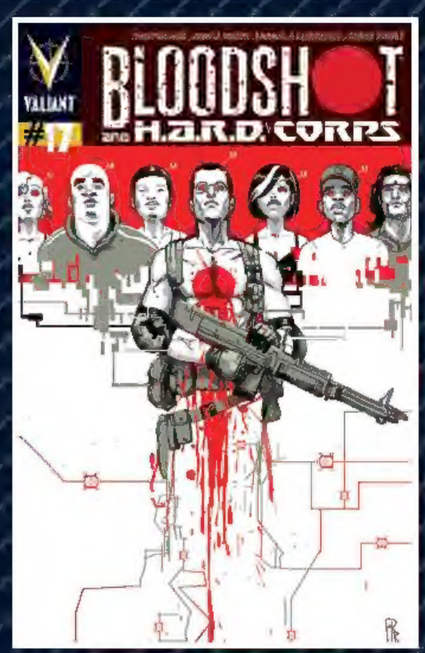
H.A.R.D. CORPS

VALIANT
BLOODSHOT
#0

VALIANT
BLOODSHOT
and H.A.R.D. CORPS
#14
ALL-NEW TITLE!
ALL-NEW TEAM!
ALL-NEW MISSION!

VALIANT
BLOODSHOT
and H.A.R.D. CORPS
15

VALIANT
BLOODSHOT
and H.A.R.D. CORPS
16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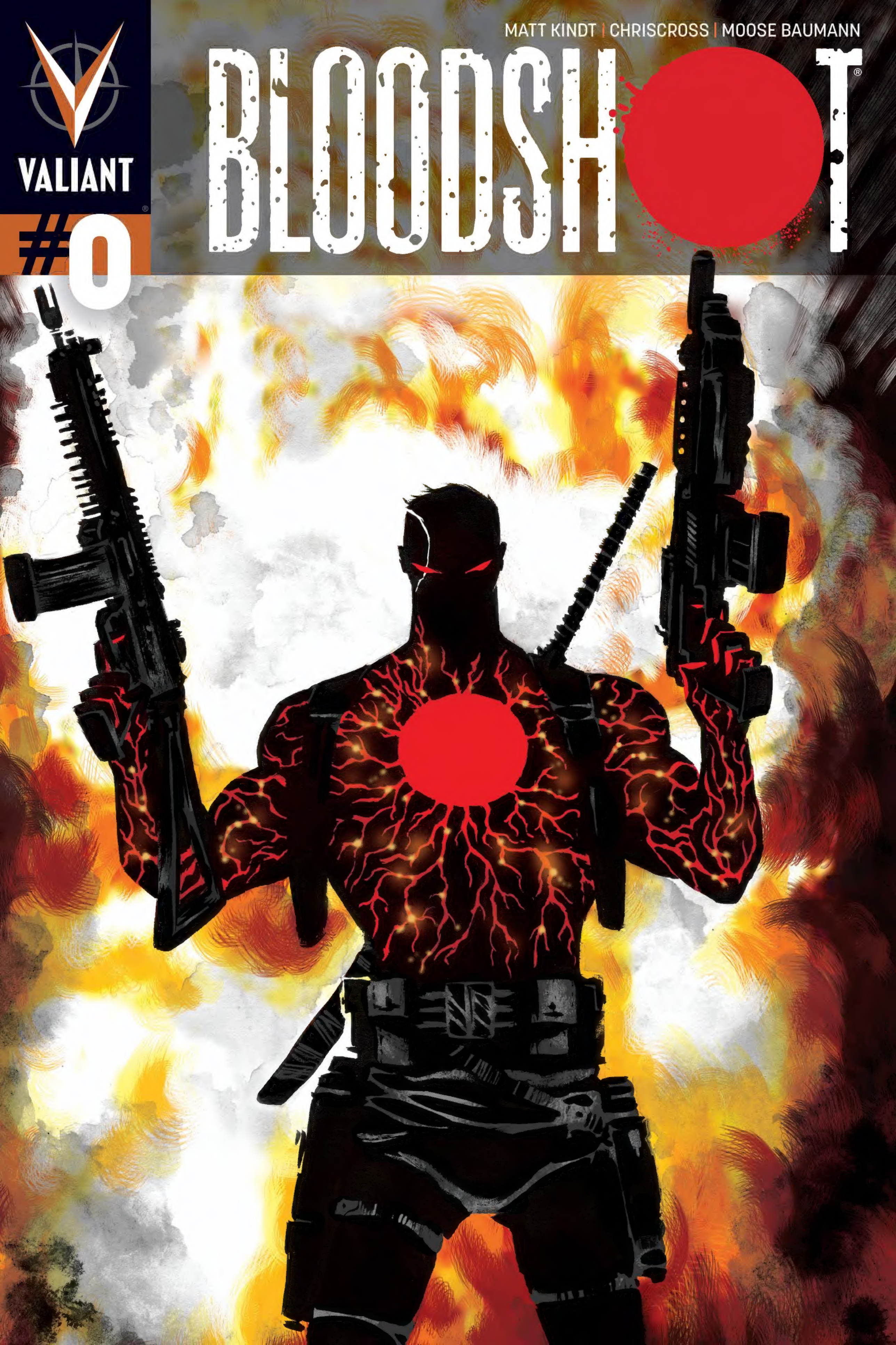
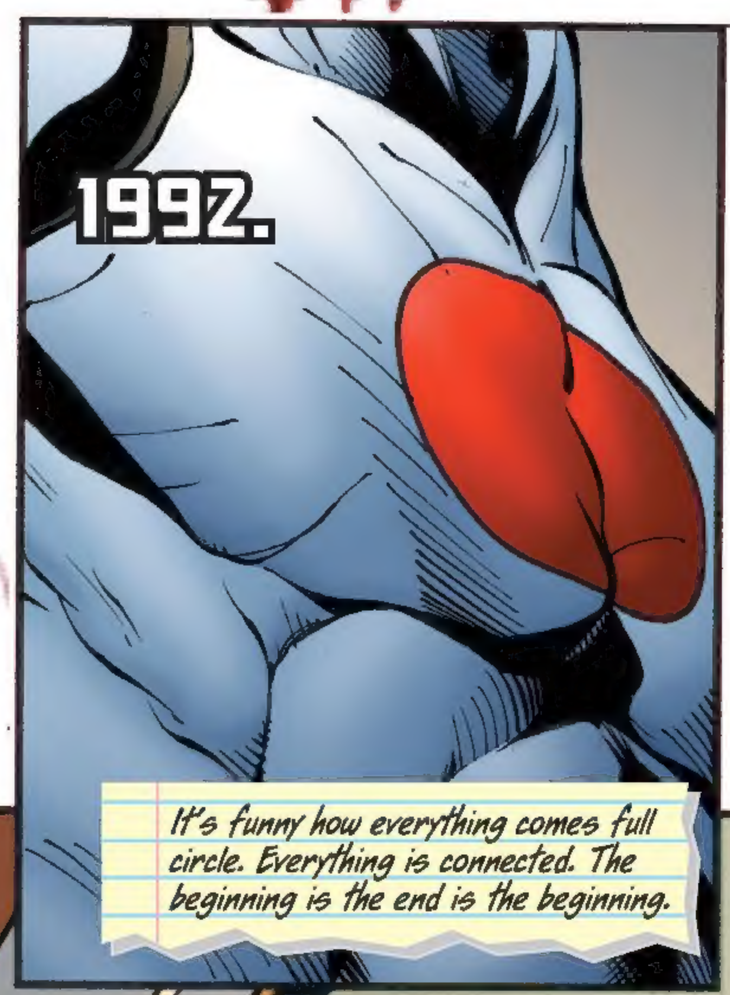
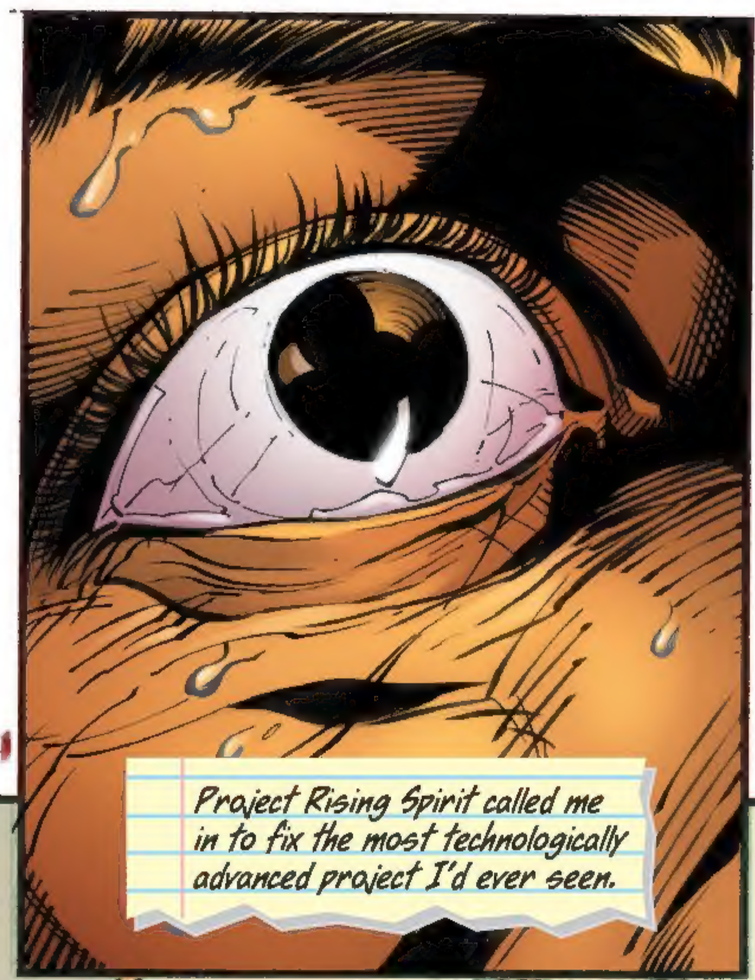
BLOODSHOT
and H.A.R.D. CORPS
#17


VALIANT
#0
MATT KINDT | CHRISCROSS | MOOSE BAUMANN
BLOODSHOT



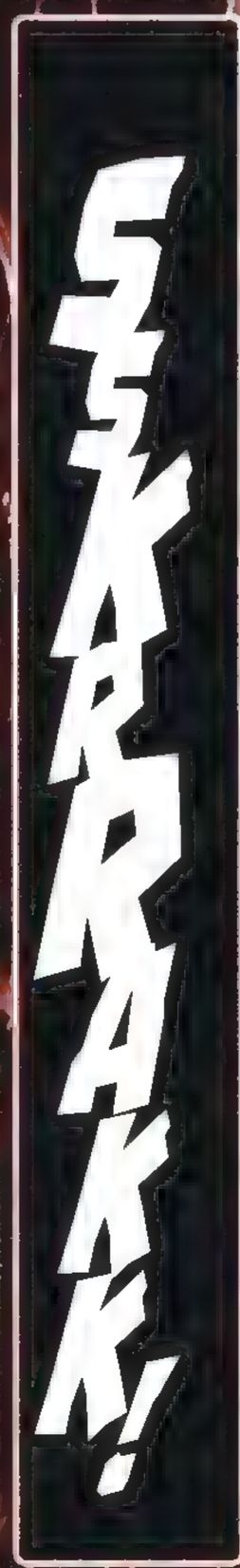


His body courses with nanites, he can talk to computers, fix himself when he's injured, and even temporarily change his appearance.

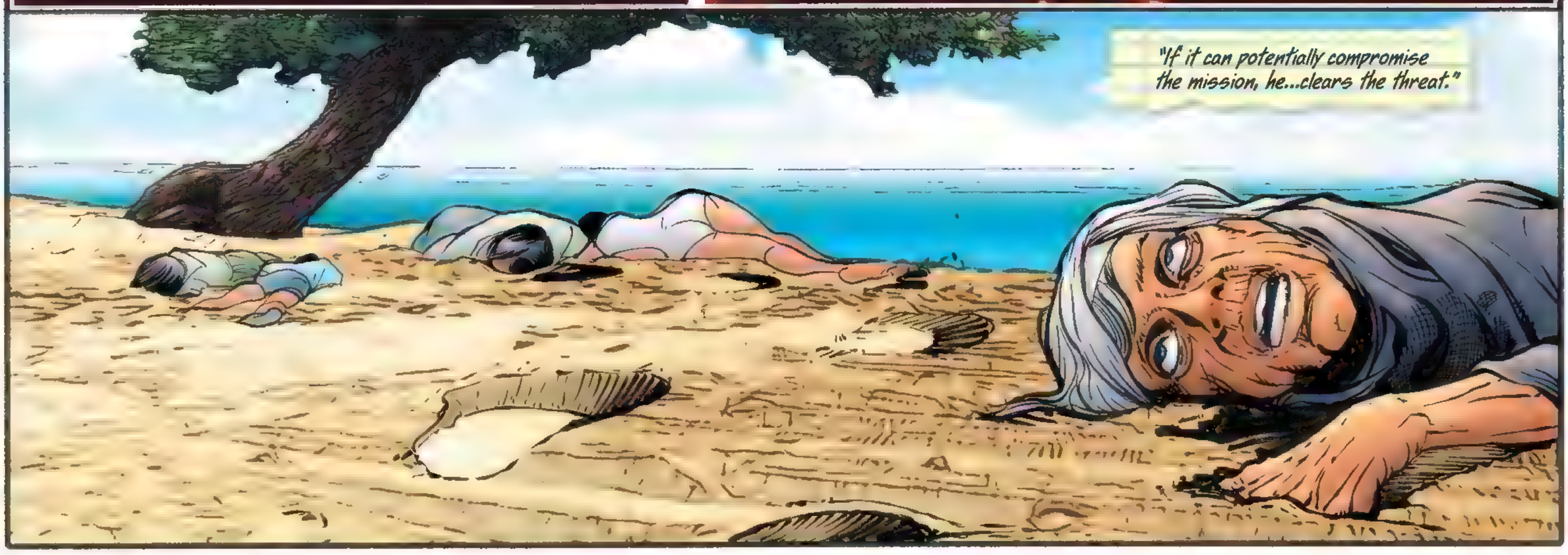
"...collateral damage."

<YOU'RE A...A... MONSTER!>

THERE MUST BE *NO WITNESSES* TO YOUR EXTRACTION, DOCTOR.


KRAK!

"Bloodshot can complete any mission we send him on," he told me. "But he will do anything to preserve the mission."
"It doesn't matter who, or what, gets in his way."


"If it can potentially compromise the mission, he...clears the threat."

I thought they wanted me to improve his situational awareness when I first started. But that wasn't it.

They installed me in a state-of-the-art office. With everything I'd need and 24-hour armed guards.
They didn't want improved situational awareness.

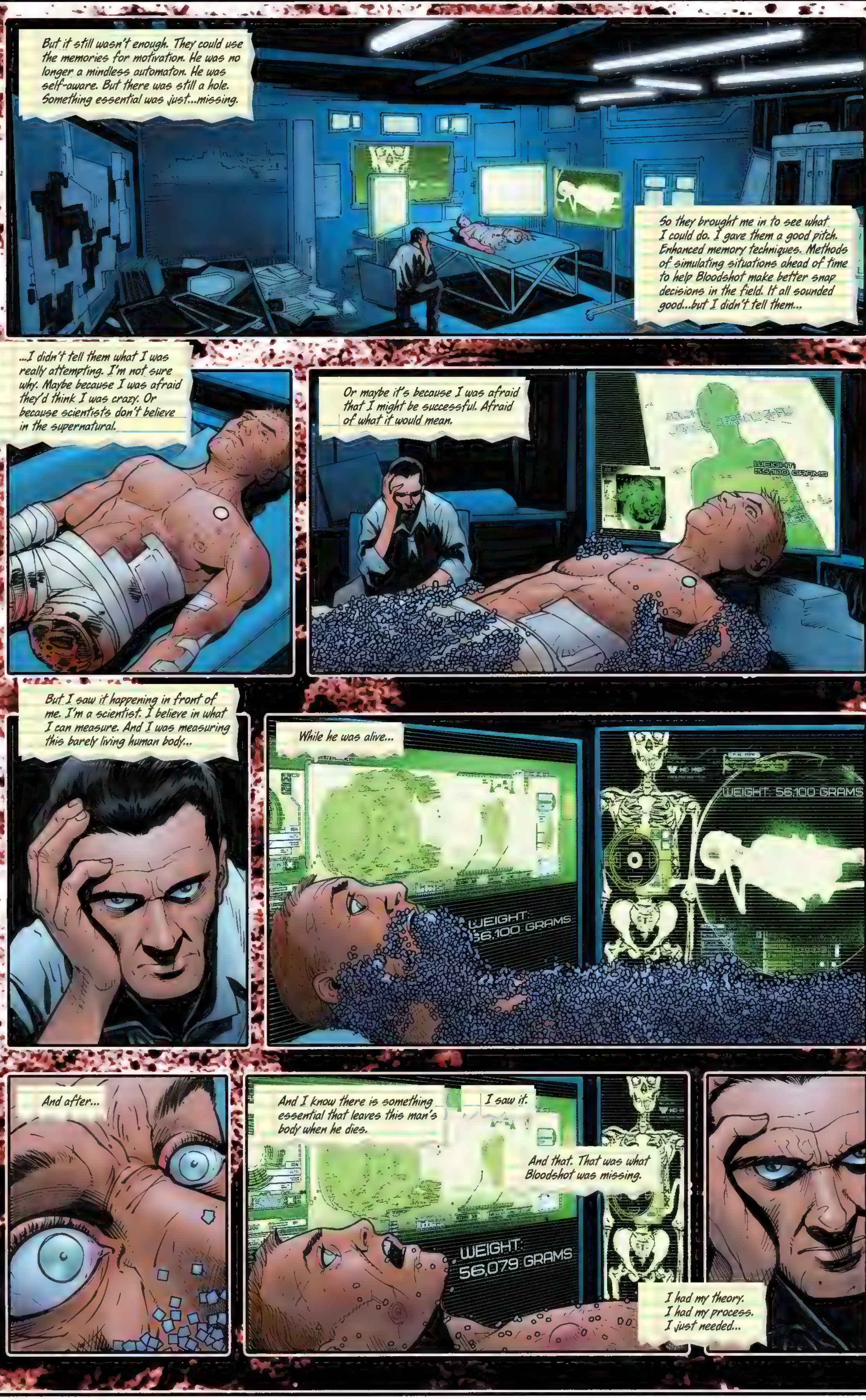
They needed me to give him a conscience. But not too much of one. Just enough so he wouldn't kill innocent women and children if they happened to be standing in front of a door he needed to get through.

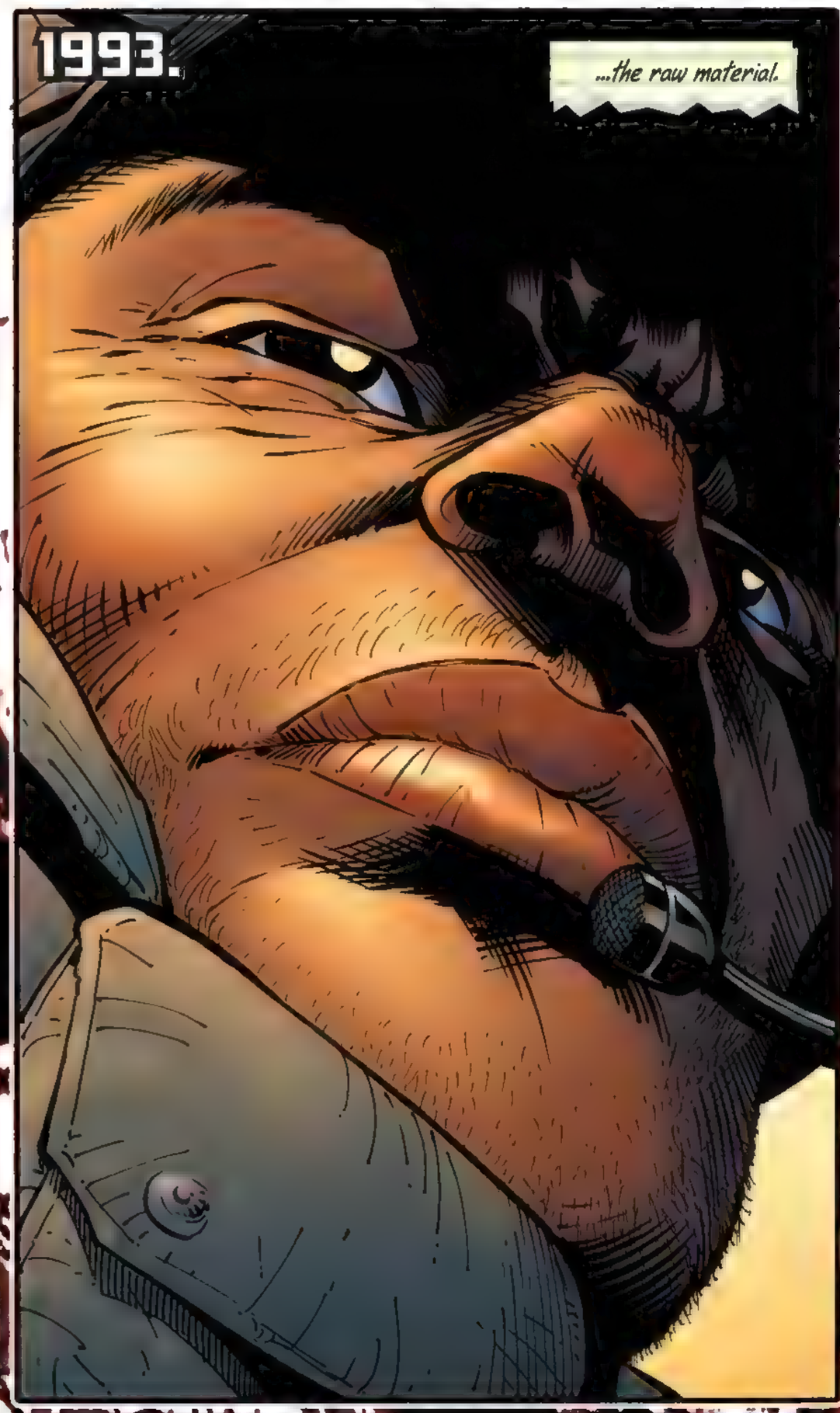
So to fully understand, I started at the beginning. The project, in various forms, had been around for quite a while.

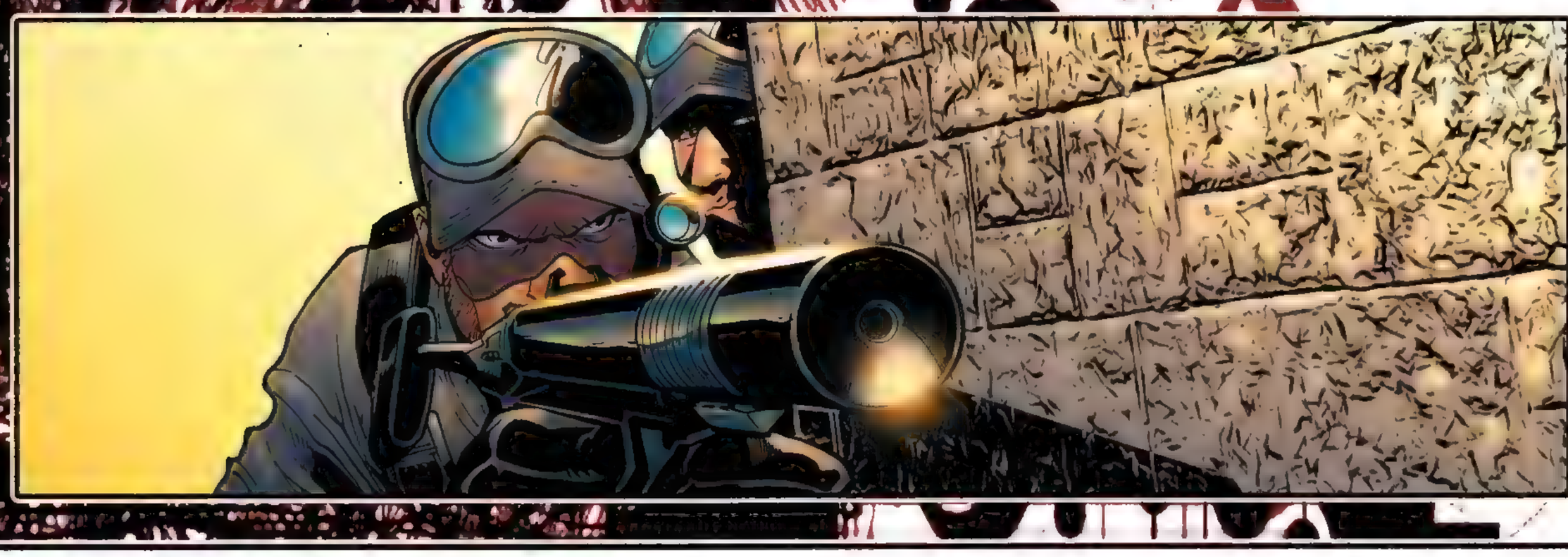
Early attempts were crude. The technology was limited and he was more of an animated Frankenstein's monster. Vulnerable and very expendable.

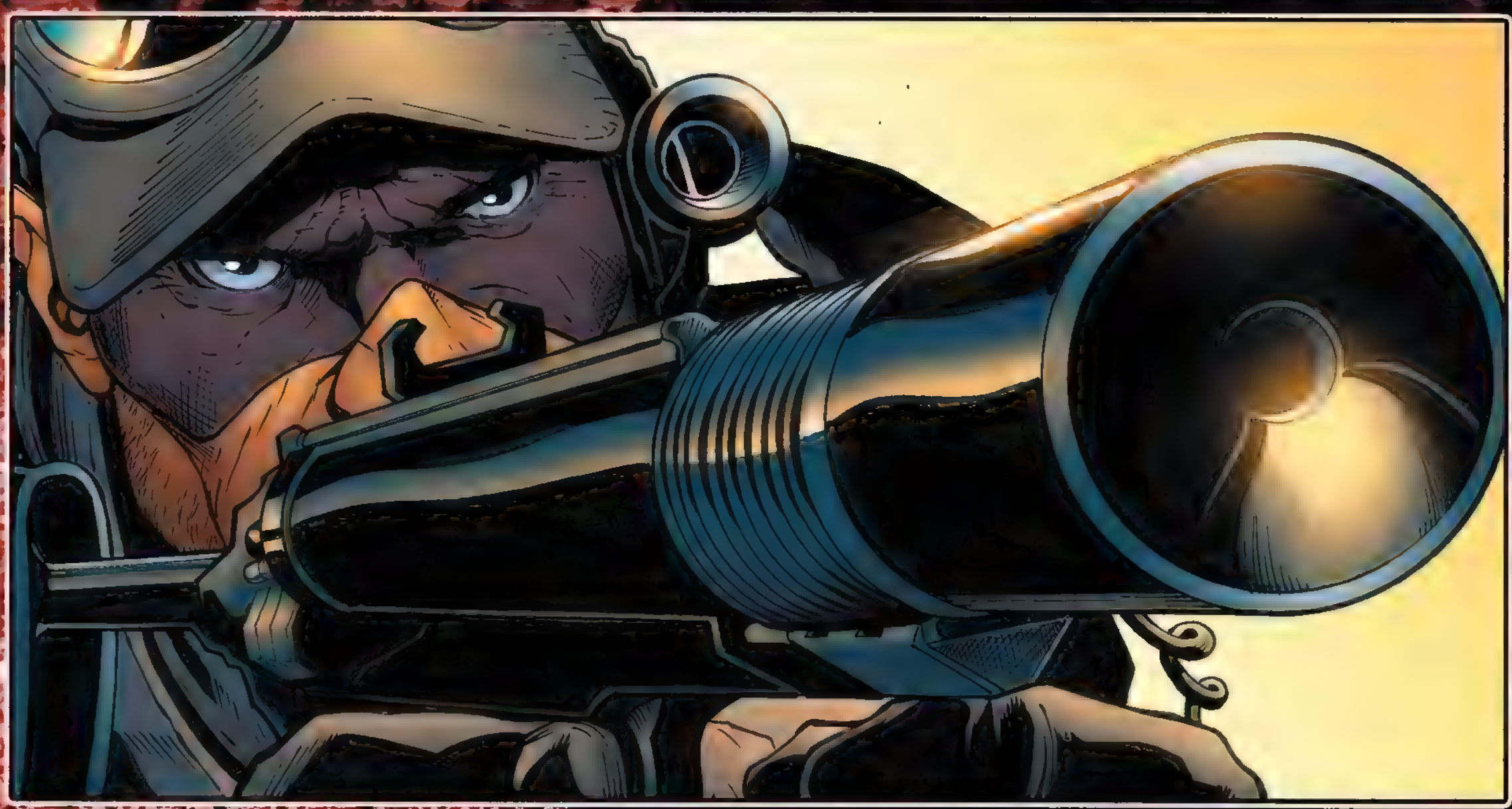
By Vietnam, they perfected the technology. His body was now fully repairable and adaptable to his environment.
But there was still the issue of measured action. He was either on or off. There was no gray area.
In the 1980s they overhauled Bloodshot. All-new programming and a total re-wiring. And a new artificial intelligence. It was closer to what they wanted.
He could almost blend in. He was utilized during the cold war in counter-espionage.
They pinned Reagan's assassination attempt on Hinckley to avoid World War III. And secretly they sent Bloodshot to take care of the true Russian culprits...
But again, he lacked a certain... finesse. Restraint was not as easy to program.

By the '90s they'd gotten a better idea. They'd found a way to take soldiers... dying soldiers' memories.
They could record them with the nanites. Pull all the memories. Memories of wives and families and pets. Love and hate.
They could dump an entire mind out of a dying soldier's head and put it into Bloodshot.
It was one of the great feats of modern science.


But it still wasn't enough. They could use the memories for motivation. He was no longer a mindless automaton. He was self-aware. But there was still a hole. Something essential was just...missing.
So they brought me in to see what I could do. I gave them a good pitch. Enhanced memory techniques. Methods of simulating situations ahead of time to help Bloodshot make better snap decisions in the field. It all sounded good...but I didn't tell them...
...I didn't tell them what I was really attempting. I'm not sure why. Maybe because I was afraid they'd think I was crazy. Or because scientists don't believe in the supernatural.
Or maybe it's because I was afraid that I might be successful. Afraid of what it would mean.
WEIGHT: 55,100 GRAMS
But I saw it happening in front of me. I'm a scientist. I believe in what I can measure. And I was measuring this barely living human body...
While he was alive...
WEIGHT: 56,100 GRAMS
WEIGHT: 56,100 GRAMS
And after...
And I know there is something essential that leaves this man's body when he dies.
I saw it.
And that. That was what Bloodshot was missing.
WEIGHT: 56,079 GRAMS
I had my theory. I had my process. I just needed...


1993.
...the raw material.

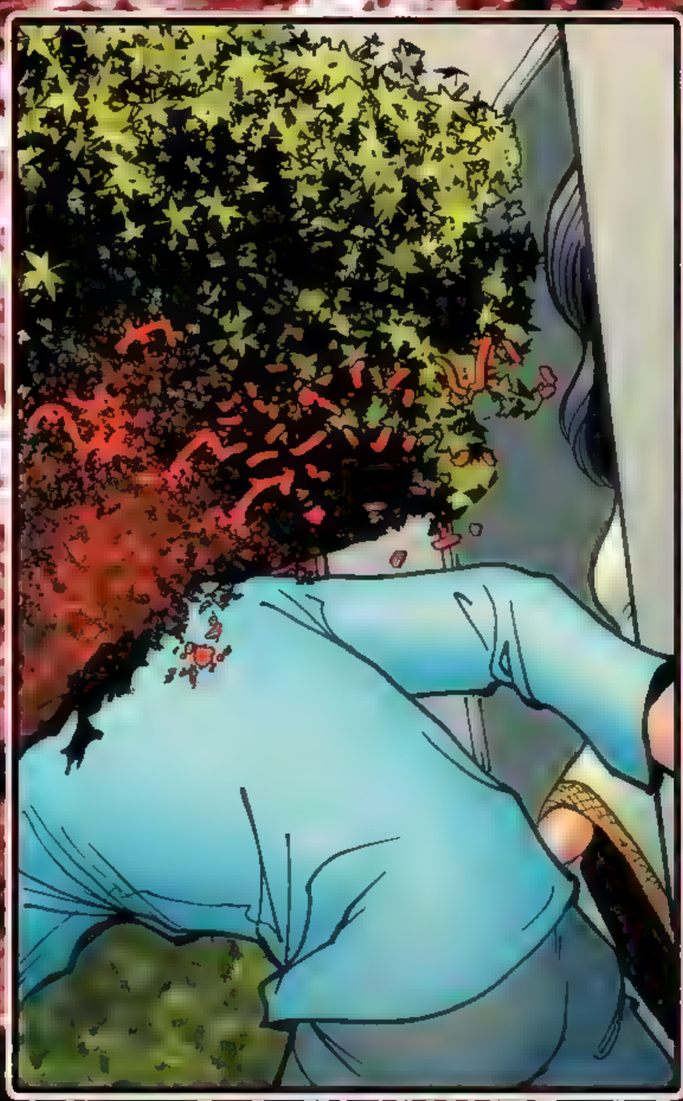




‹DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?›

‹WHA--?›

PFFT

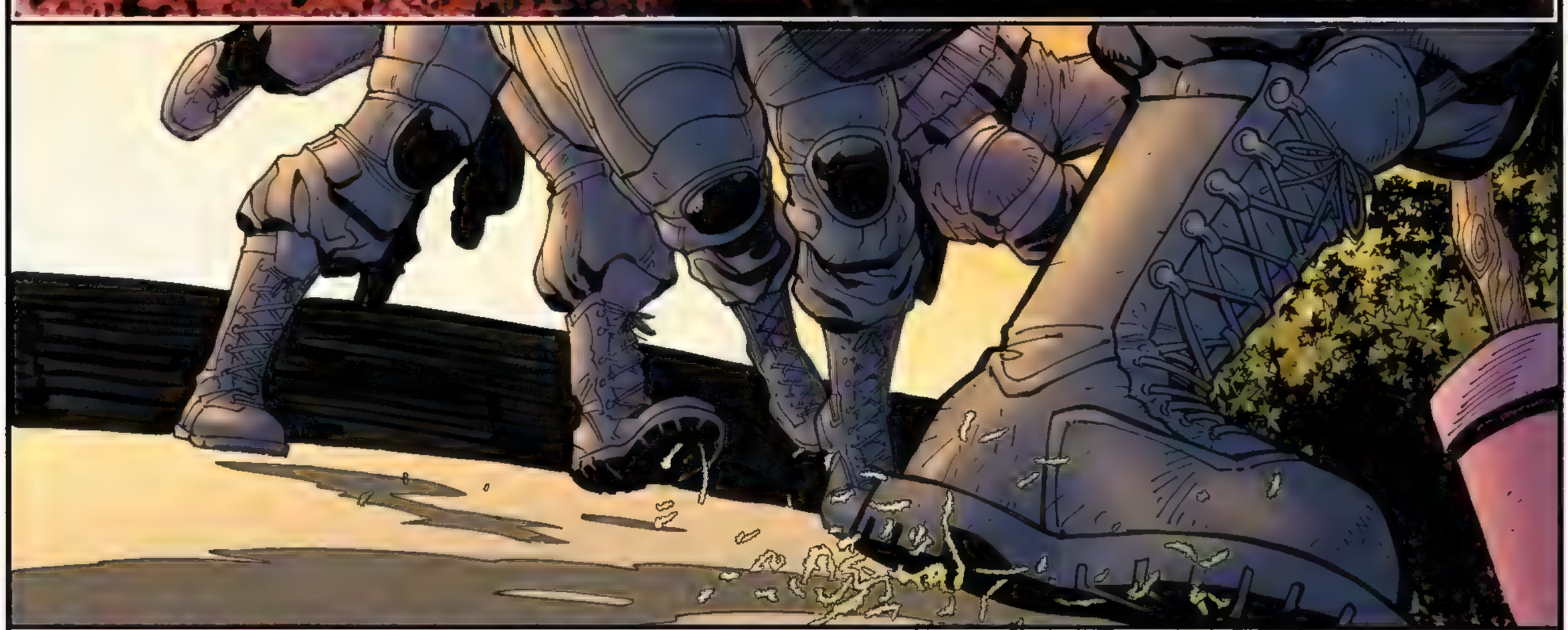


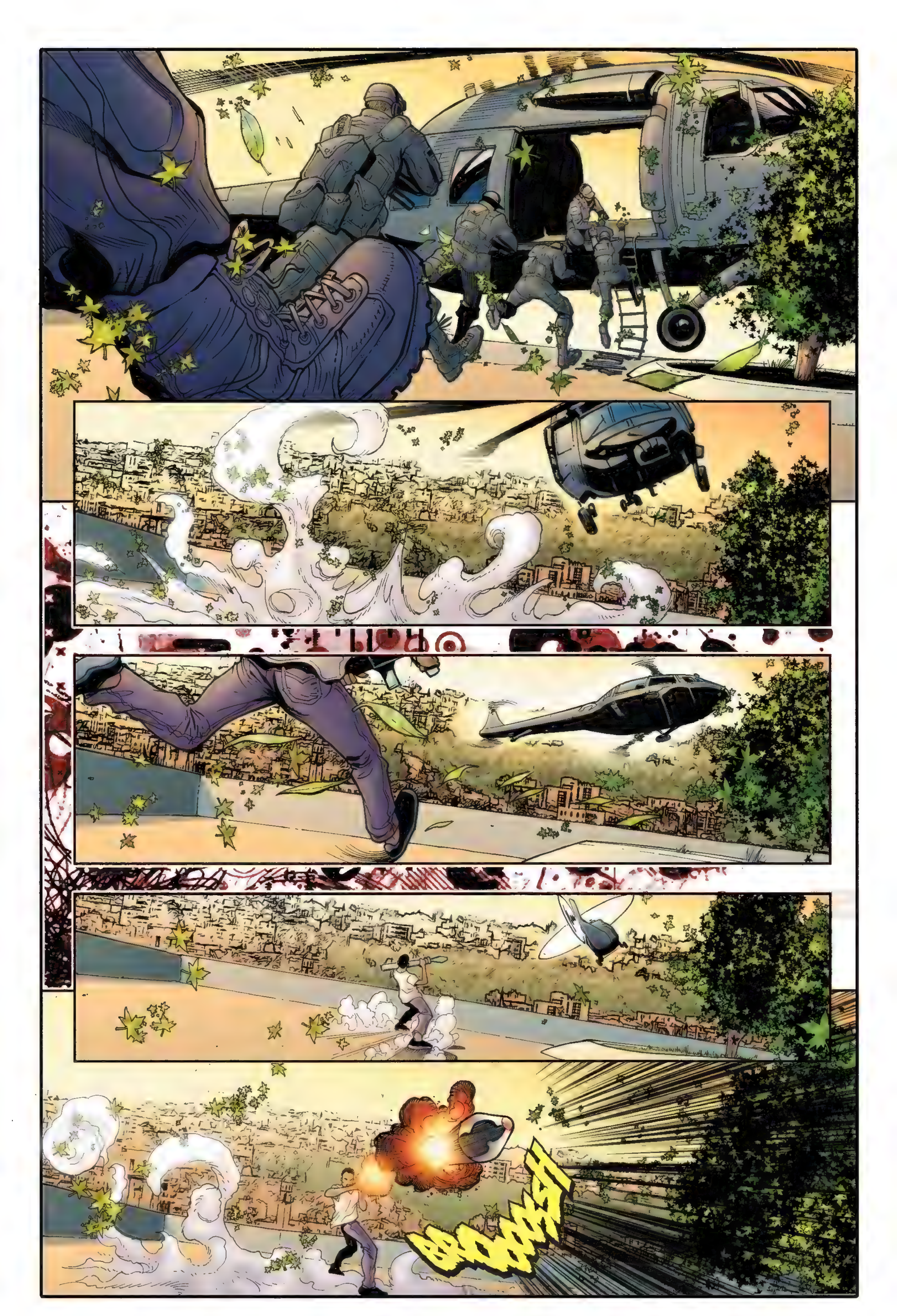
<YOU HAVE NO RIGHT! HOW DARE YOU-->

PFFT
PFFT

PFFT

TARGETS DOWN. HEAD TO THE EXTRACTION POINT.




BOOOOM

WE'VE GOT--
FRSSHHH
BRASHH
BSH
BSH
SKRRASSHHH
UNH... WH--?
DAMMIT...

I spent a year re-programming the nanites. I didn't tell anyone what I was doing. I keep this journal by hand. And I leave it hidden in a trashcan. So if I ever die, it will eventually just be thrown away.

BRRRRPP
BRRRRPP
BRRRRPP
BRRRRPP
BRRRRPP
They thought I was programming the nanites to simulate a conscience.

But I was really just programming the nanites to swarm faster. To cover the body more completely.
How do you find...a soul? There, I said it. A soul. When you can't see it? My solution was to increase the nanites' speed, and to make them not just regenerate tissue...

But to grab. To collect. Everything. To pull everything they can from a dying body at the moment of expiration.

In hopes of just blindly capturing that essence. The enigmatic "21 grams."

But how do you find a candidate? Someone with the prerequisite training and mindset to be a soldier? The soul of a fighter? Still alive...

...but willing to give his life?

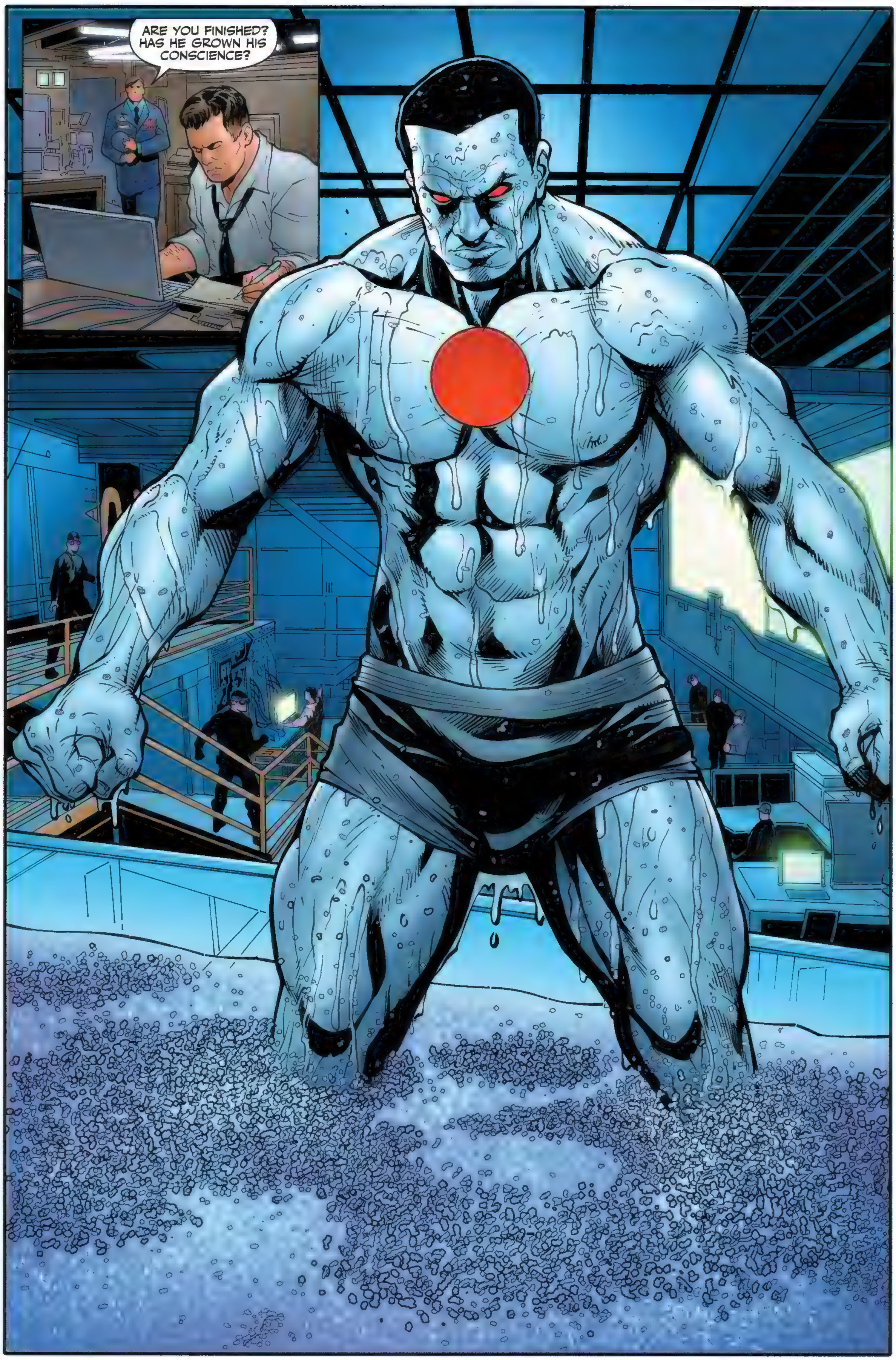
I never asked where they found him.
Or the circumstances of his near death.
The truth is...
...I didn't want to know.
HURRY UP. BEFORE MORE LOCALS SHOW UP. AND BEFORE THIS POOR GUY DIES. THEY NEED HIM ALIVE.
JESUS... LOOK AT THIS GUY.

So after a year of re-programming... the nanites had their moment of truth.

As the man died in front of me...

...the nanites went about completing their new mission. Not to repair. But to collect. And collect they did.

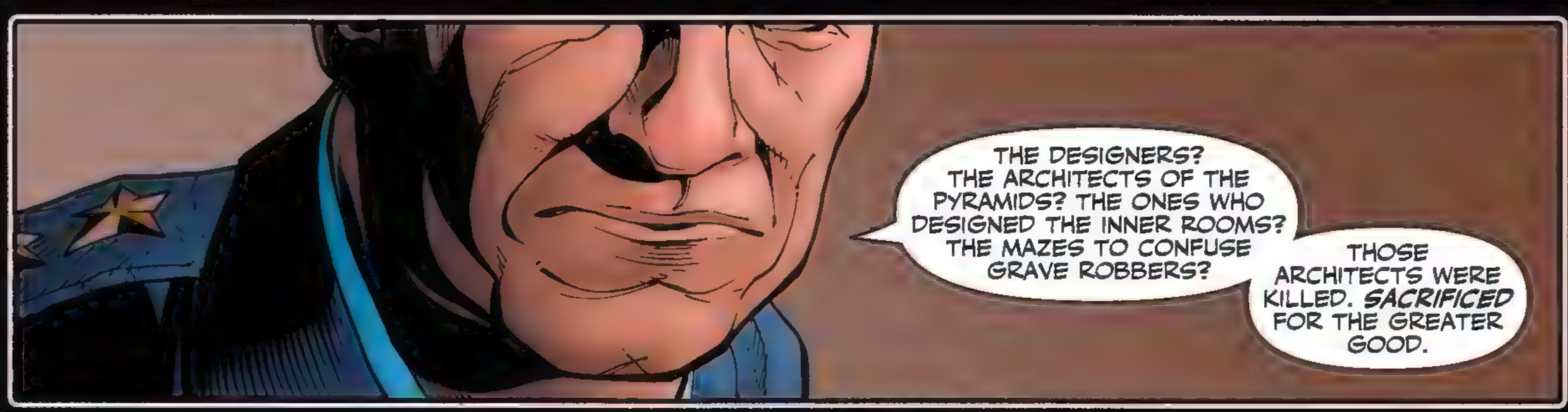
It happened before my eyes.


ARE YOU FINISHED? HAS HE GROWN HIS CONSCIENCE?

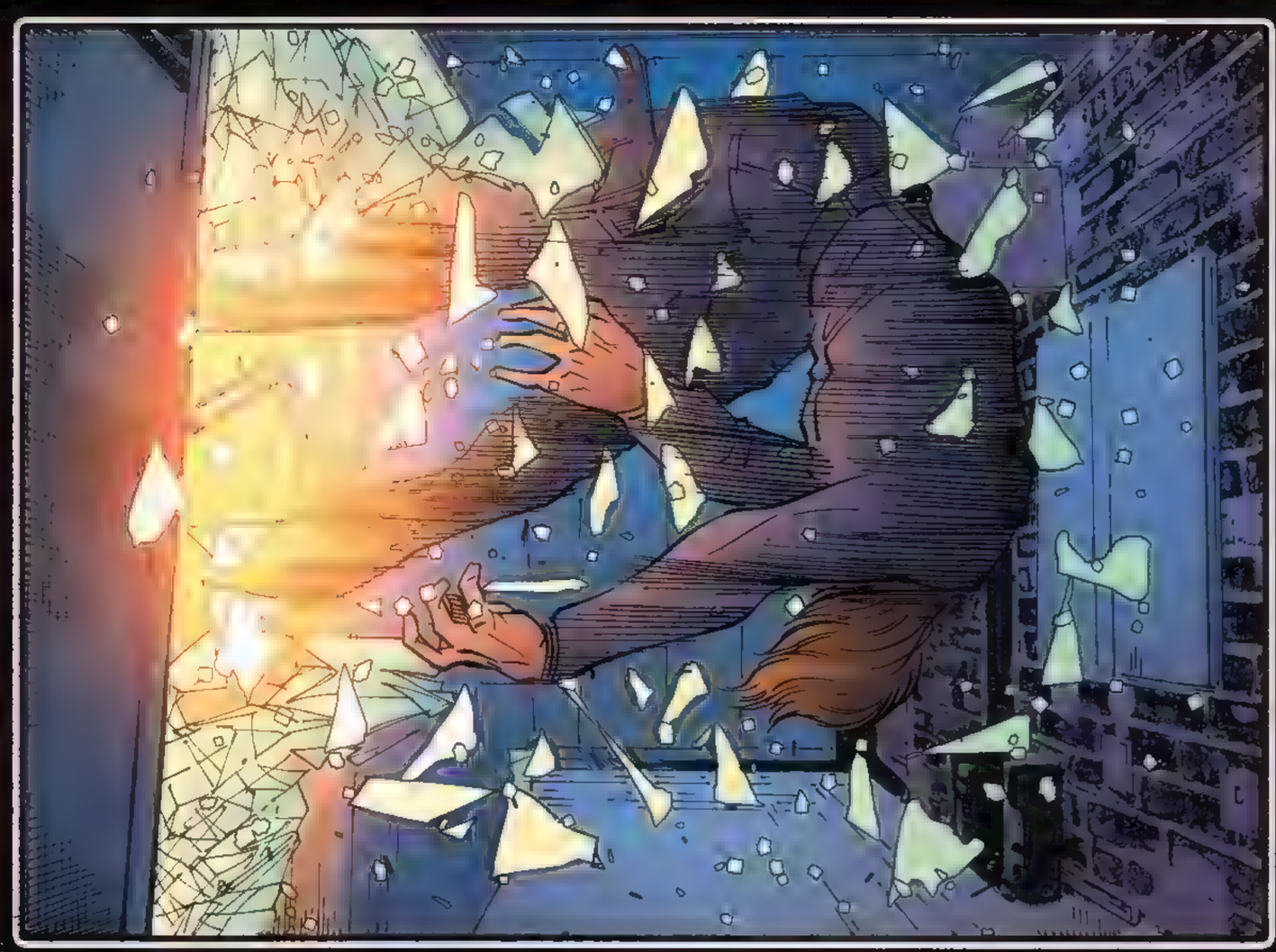
I told the general "yes," of course. But I didn't really know. Only time would tell.
Will a soul make a difference?
Have I fixed Bloodshot?
Or have I damned a man whose name I never knew to an eternal living hell?
I have a feeling I'll never know.
I'm sure I'll be taken off the job eventually. Paid to remain silent.
And Bloodshot will go about his business.
No one the wiser. His controllers...
...his masters will never know what I tried to do.

YOU'VE DONE AN EXCELLENT JOB, REES. I WANT TO THANK YOU.
WHY...WELL. THANK YOU, SIR. IT WAS A YEAR OF MY LIFE BUT A YEAR NOT SPENT IN VAIN, I'M SURE.

REES, WHAT YOU'VE DONE IS TANTAMOUNT TO THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE EGYPTIANS. THE GREAT PYRAMID. A WORK THAT WILL STAND TILL THE END OF TIME. BUT THE INTERESTING THING ABOUT THE PYRAMIDS, REES...


THE DESIGNERS? THE ARCHITECTS OF THE PYRAMIDS? THE ONES WHO DESIGNED THE INNER ROOMS? THE MAZES TO CONFUSE GRAVE ROBBERS?
THOSE ARCHITECTS WERE KILLED. *SACRIFICED* FOR THE GREATER GOOD.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, SIR...

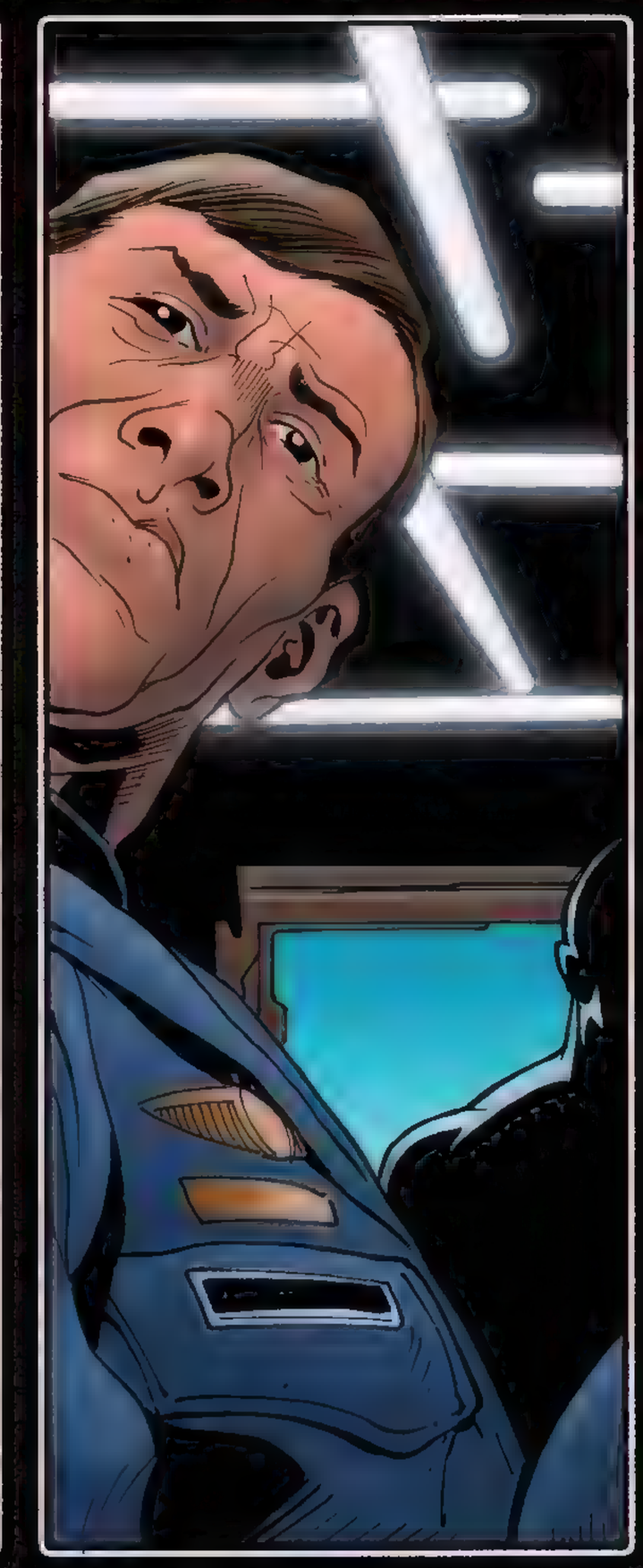


KILLED TO PRESERVE THE SECRETS. SO NO ONE ALIVE WOULD *EVER* KNOW *EVERYTHING*.

BLOODSHOT IS A GREAT PYRAMID, REES. AND YOU?

KRRSSSH!
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
YOU, REES...

...ARE AN ARCHITECT.



TAKE HIM.
YES, SIR.

P SAF
OXY
CAR
NO...

I wonder if I will ever get to see him again...
To look into his eyes...
If I look deep enough... hard enough...
...will I be able to tell?
Did I succeed?
Will there be someone?
Someone in there?

VALIANT
#14
CHRISTOS GAGE | JOSHUA DYSART | EMANUELA LUPACCHINO | BRIAN REBER
BLOODSHOT
and H.A.R.D. CORPS
ALL-NEW TITLE!
ALL-NEW TEAM!
ALL-NEW MISSION!

BLOODSHOT

OUR STORY SO FAR

Project Rising Spirit built its corporate fortune on war. And to wage war, they created the perfect living weapon—Bloodshot. Nanoscopic machines enhance his strength and speed, repair tissue to recover from injury, communicate with other computers, and allow him to alter his appearance. PRS gave Bloodshot a lifetime of false memories and sent him to capture psiots—individuals imbued with extraordinary powers—who they imprisoned, experimented on, and dispatched to fight in war zones around the world. They also used Bloodshot stateside to subvert and sabotage rival corporations like Harada Global Conglomerates.

The leader of HGC is Toyo Harada—an immensely powerful psiot who built his corporate fortune to change the world. Determined to put an end to war—his way—Harada has used his company's vast wealth as a front for the Harbinger Foundation, finding and training psiots before they fall into the clutches of PRS.

After years of covert warfare, Bloodshot rebelled against his puppet-masters, sparking a brutal confrontation in Las Vegas that threatened to spill over into the rest of the world. PRS reactivated the H.A.R.D.Corps—Harbinger Active Resistance Division—a paramilitary unit of ordinary humans outfitted with brain implants to hot-wire psiot abilities. But they were decimated...and Toyo Harada captured his arch-rivals' billion-dollar man!

HARADA GLOBAL CONGLOMERATES:
RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT.
EL SEGUNDO, CALIFORNIA.

CONGRATULATIONS, MR. HARADA.

IT'S QUITE A *TRIUMPH.*

GIVEN YOUR HISTORY WITH *PROJECT RISING SPIRIT*...ALL THOSE DECADES OF STRUGGLE... TO FINALLY HAVE THEIR GREATEST WEAPON IN YOUR HANDS FOR STUDY.

HOW LONG HAS HE BEEN LIKE THAT?

AH, TWO DAYS.

I DISTINCTLY SAID *NO TORTURE,* DR. LEFF. WE ARE NOT RISING SPIRIT.

OF COURSE, SIR. EVERYTHING YOU SAW IS NECESSARY TO RESTRAIN BLOODSHOT AND ALLOW US ACCESS TO THE NANITES IN HIS SYSTEM.

OTHERWISE, SIMPLY BEING IN THE SAME ROOM WITH THE FULLY FUNCTIONAL NANITES WOULD PRESENT GREAT RISK TO ALL OUR LIVES.

I COULD ADMINISTER PAINKILLERS, BUT I ASSUMED YOU WANTED HIM ALERT FOR YOUR INTERRO--uh, *DISCUSSION.*

IF I WAS WRONG--

NO, IT'S FINE.

AS LONG AS WE'VE GOOD REASON.

...hhrrrr...

EXTRAORDINARY.

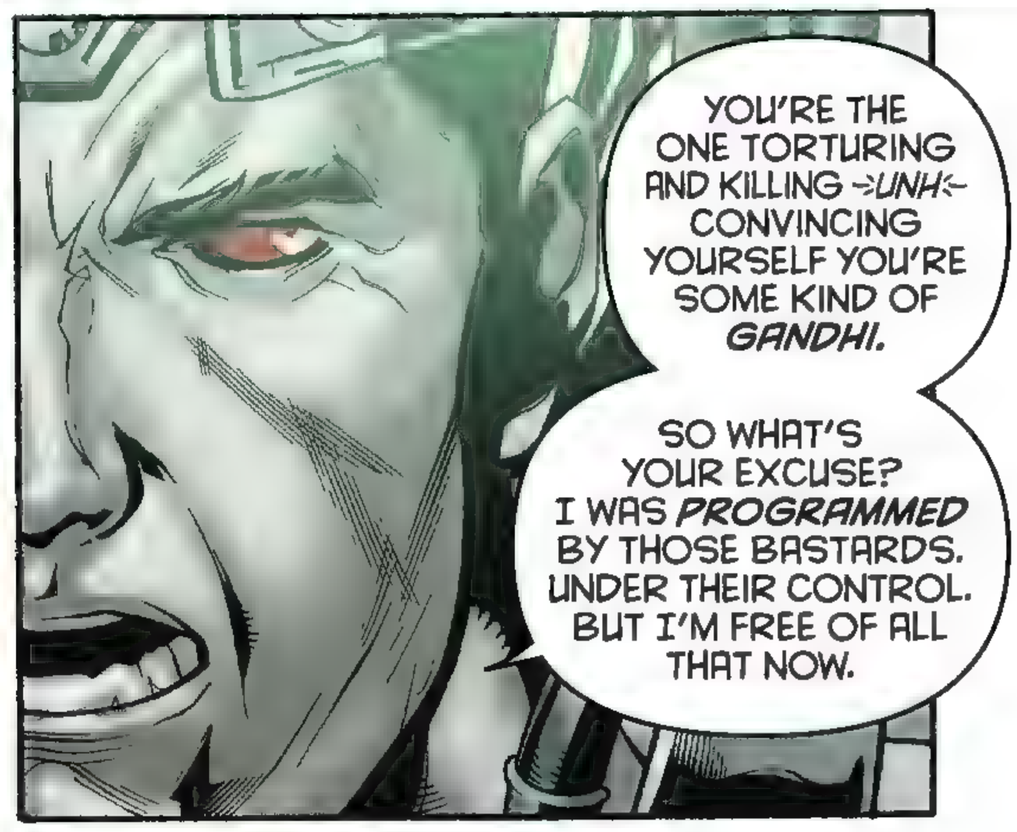
I MUST SAY, BLOODSHOT, I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING QUITE LIKE YOU. THE NANITES IN YOUR BODY HAVE EVOLVED INTO SOMETHING WHOLLY ***UNIQUE.***

BILLIONS OF SELF-REPLICATING AMINO POWERED CYBER-MICROBIOTA INTEGRATED INTO YOUR BLOODSTREAM, MUSCLES, AND BONE FIBERS.

AND THE THINGS THEY LET YOU DO...REGENERATION, TECHNOPATHY, LIMITED SHAPE-SHIFTING...CAN YOU EVEN ***CONCEIVE*** OF THE POTENTIAL HUMANITARIAN APPLICATIONS?

NO, OF COURSE YOU CAN'T. HOW TRAGICALLY PREDICTABLE.

PROJECT RISING SPIRIT STUMBLES ONTO SOMETHING WORLD-CHANGING, AND THEIR ONLY THOUGHT IS TO ***WEAPONIZE*** IT. TIRESOME.

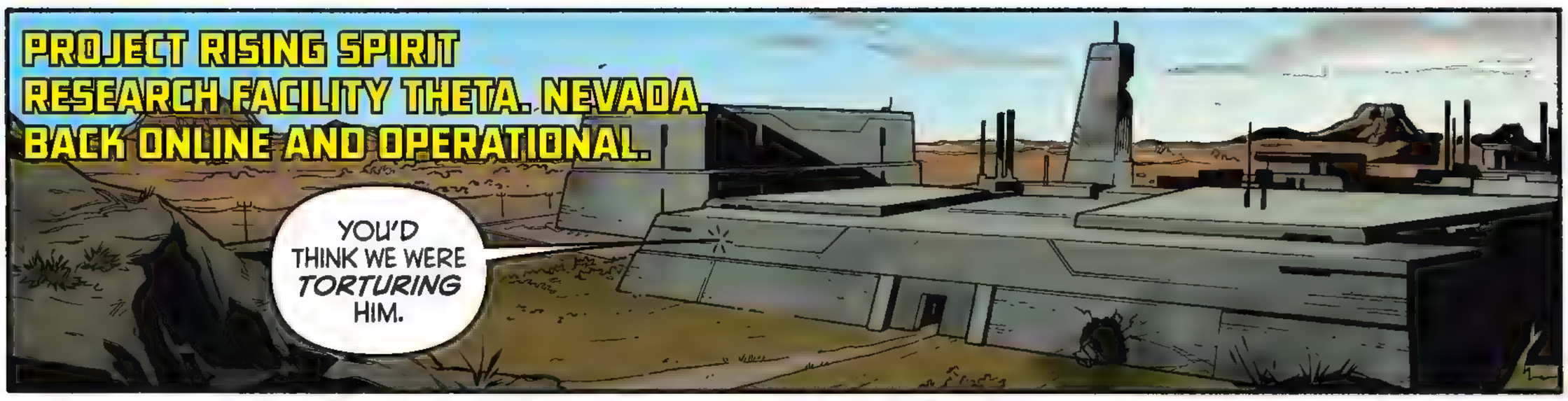


I SEE. THEN THE MURDERS YOU'VE COMMITTED LATELY WERE BY *CHOICE.*

YOU WANNA COMPARE BODY COUNTS? *LET'S GO.*
I MAKE DIFFICULT CHOICES FOR THE GOOD OF THE WORLD. I *AGONIZE* OVER THEM.
YOU KILL WITHOUT COMPUNCTION. AND THE NANITES FOLLOW YOUR LEAD.
I BELIEVE I'VE FINALLY FOUND A WAY TO CHANGE THAT. DOCTOR...

HNN!
WHAT I'M GOING TO DO IS TO STUDY YOUR NANITES *SEPARATELY* FROM YOU AND YOUR VIOLENT TENDENCIES. SEE HOW MUCH OF YOU IS IN THEM AND VICE VERSA.
SEEMS ONLY FAIR TO GIVE THEM THE SAME FREEDOM FROM YOU THAT YOU DEMANDED FROM *RISING SPIRIT.* SEEING AS HOW YOU'RE SUCH A FIRM BELIEVER IN FREE WILL NOW.
S-SURE, HARADA. THEY'RE *HUNGRY* FOR YOU. COME AND...GET 'EM.
AFTER CONSIDERABLE STUDY...

GNAGHH!
...I FEEL CONFIDENT I'M READY TO DO JUST THAT.


PROJECT RISING SPIRIT
RESEARCH FACILITY THETA. NEVADA.
BACK ONLINE AND OPERATIONAL.
YOU'D THINK WE WERE *TORTURING* HIM.

WELL, MAJOR PALMER IS NOT WHAT YOU'D CALL A *"PEOPLE PERSON."* HE LIVES SPITTING DISTANCE FROM THE NORTH POLE FOR SAFETY REASONS. *NOT* HIS OWN.
YOU FORCED HIM OUT OF RETIREMENT FOR A DISASTROUS BLOODBATH OF A MISSION THAT COST THE LIVES OF TWO OF HIS MEN...THE CLOSEST THING CHARLIE EVER HAD TO *FRIENDS.*
FRANKLY, MR. KOZOL, HE PROBABLY JUST WANTS TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE HE *KILLS* YOU.
YOU JUST DESCRIBED THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE I DEAL WITH, CAROL.
BUT OUR MULTI-BILLION-DOLLAR WALKING W.M.D. HAS FALLEN INTO THE HANDS OF A GODLIKE SUPERHUMAN WHO'S BEEN TRYING TO *DESTROY* P.R.S. SINCE I WAS IN *DIAPERS.*

I NEED BLOODSHOT RETRIEVED *ASAP,* AND I CAN'T DO IT WITH ROOKIES.
ARE WE ANY CLOSER TO PINPOINTING HARADA'S LOCATION?
BLOODSHOT'S NANITE TRANSMISSIONS ARE BEING SCRAMBLED. WE'VE ONLY BEEN ABLE TO NARROW IT TO THE SOUTHWESTERN U.S.

SIR, IF YOU'RE COUNTING ON MY...*HISTORY* WITH PALMER... WELL, HE'S NOT A VERY *SENTIMENTAL* MAN.
I KNOW. IF ANYTHING, IT COMPLICATES THINGS.
BUT HARADA DECIMATED THE TEAM. YOU'RE LIFELINE'S ONLY SURVIVING VETERAN. WE *NEED* YOU.
I CAN HANDLE MAJOR--

--*PALMER!* YOU'RE LOOKING... WELL.

SCREW YOU, KOZOL.
WE HAD A DEAL.
I KILL SOME RENEGADE SUPER-KIDS, SAVE THEIR HOSTAGES, THEN I *GO HOME.* END OF STORY.
BLOODSHOT TRIED TO PLAY BABYDADDY TO THOSE KIDS AND PISSED OFF THE MOST POWERFUL GUY ON THE PLANET. THAT'S *HIS* PROBLEM, AND YOURS. *NOT* MINE.
I COULDN'T AGREE MORE.
YOU'VE MISUNDERSTOOD ME COMPLETELY. YOUR SERVICE IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.

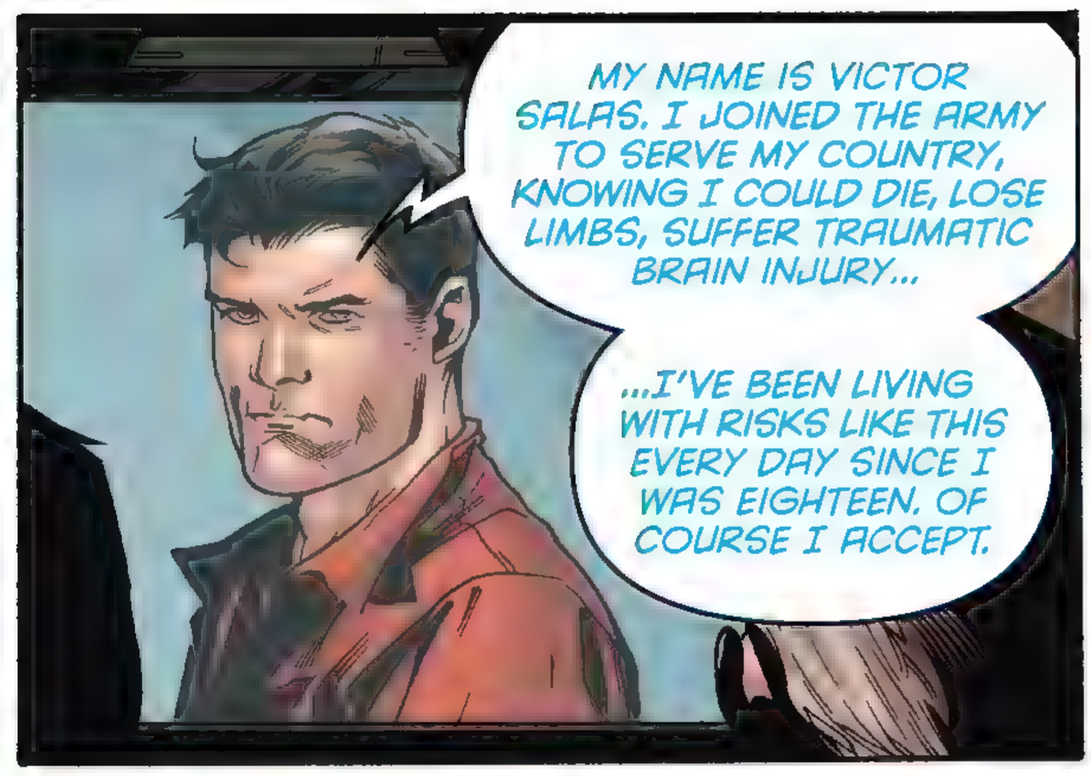
MY PERSONAL JET IS FUELED AND READY TO FLY YOU BACK TO THAT GODFORSAKEN FORESKIN OF THE AMERICAS WE CALL NORTHERN CANADA.
BUT BEFORE YOU GO, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING.
WHAT THE *HELL* IS THIS?

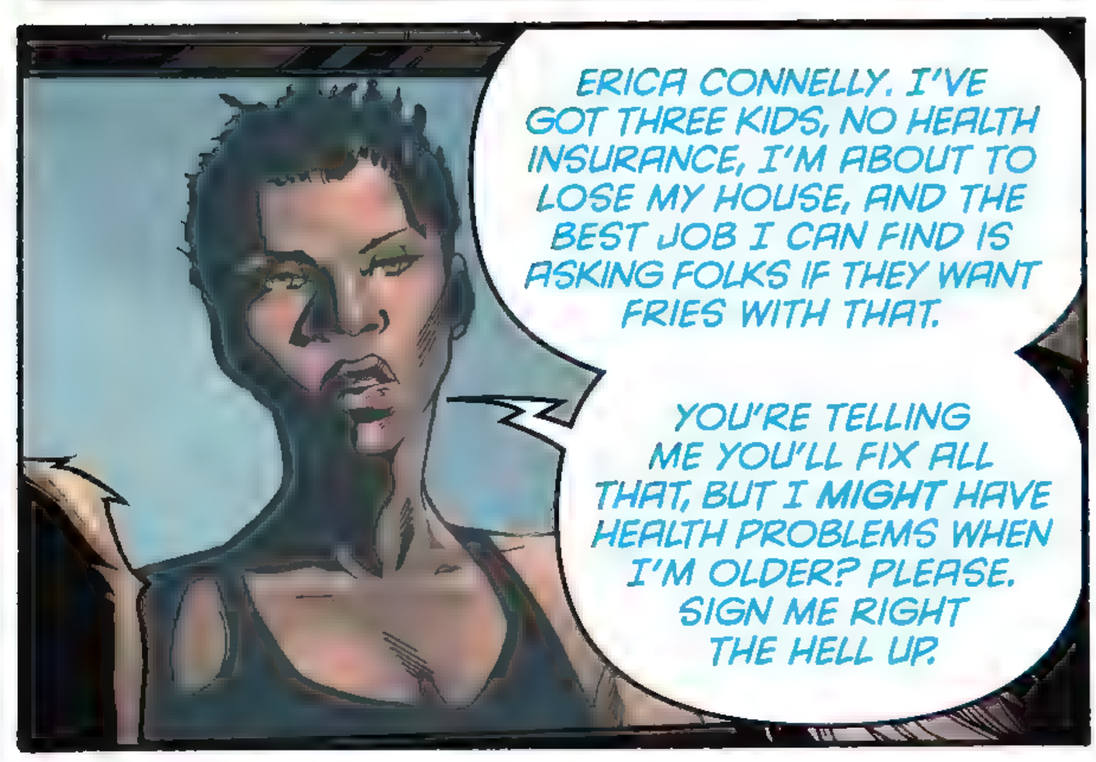
HARADA FRIED LIFELINE... H.A.R.D.CORPS WAS *SHUT DOWN.*
AND NOW IT'S *RE*-REACTIVATED.
PALMER, THE NUMBER OF ENHANCED THREATS IN THE WORLD IS AT A DANGEROUS LEVEL. MORE SO THAN EVER. CONVENTIONAL FORCES AREN'T ENOUGH.
YEAH, I'M PRETTY SURE THAT'S MOSTLY P.R.S.'S FAULT.
ANCIENT HISTORY. I'M TALKING ABOUT *TODAY'S* NEEDS.
FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS *NEED* THEIR OWN TRAINED, RELIABLE AGENTS EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH ANY THREATS THAT MIGHT ARISE.
PROJECT RISING SPIRIT WILL SUPPLY THOSE AGENTS.

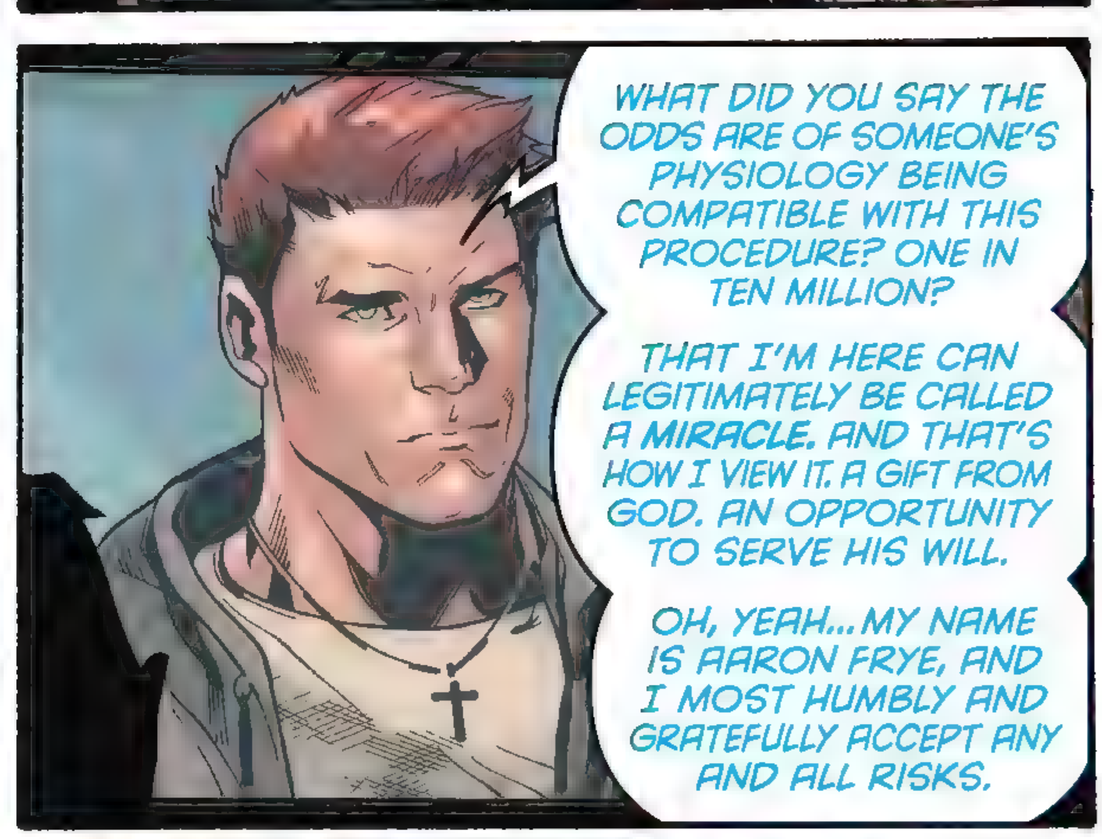
DO THESE... RECRUITS...
...DO THEY *KNOW?*

PLEASE, MR. PALMER. I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY DID IT BACK IN YOUR DAY, BUT *WE* DO NOT DECEIVE OUR RECRUITS.
I ASSURE YOU. WE GAVE THEM *ALL* THE FACTS. THEY COME BY THEIR PERSONAL CHOICES HONESTLY.

THEY ARE ALL QUITE AWARE THEIR BRAINS WERE ALTERED TO CHANNEL PSIOT POWERS. ABILITIES FOR WHICH THE NORMAL HUMAN BODY IS SIMPLY NOT BUILT.
BUT JUST TO SET YOUR MIND AT EASE...FOR LEGAL REASONS, WE RECORDED THEIR CONSENT. HAVE A LOOK AT H.A.R.D.CORPS, THE NEW GENERATION.
YOUR LEGACY.

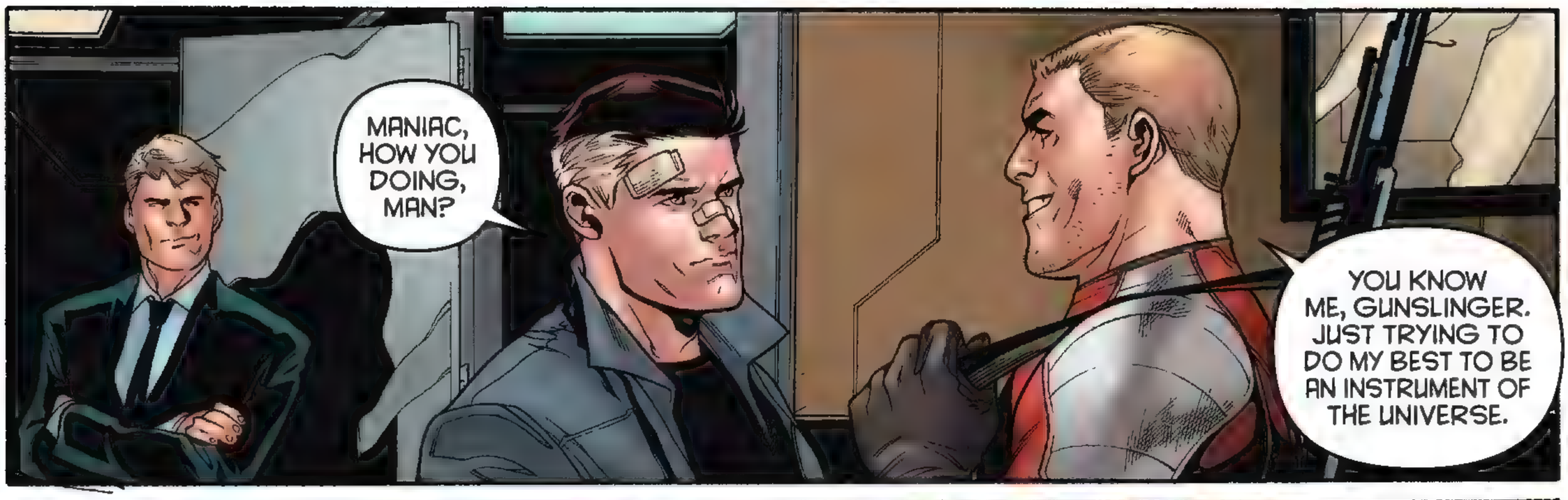

MY NAME IS VICTOR SALAS. I JOINED THE ARMY TO SERVE MY COUNTRY, KNOWING I COULD DIE, LOSE LIMBS, SUFFER TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY...
...I'VE BEEN LIVING WITH RISKS LIKE THIS EVERY DAY SINCE I WAS EIGHTEEN. OF COURSE I ACCEPT.


ERICA CONNELLY. I'VE GOT THREE KIDS, NO HEALTH INSURANCE, I'M ABOUT TO LOSE MY HOUSE, AND THE BEST JOB I CAN FIND IS ASKING FOLKS IF THEY WANT FRIES WITH THAT.
YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU'LL FIX ALL THAT, BUT I MIGHT HAVE HEALTH PROBLEMS WHEN I'M OLDER? PLEASE. SIGN ME RIGHT THE HELL UP.


WHAT DID YOU SAY THE ODDS ARE OF SOMEONE'S PHYSIOLOGY BEING COMPATIBLE WITH THIS PROCEDURE? ONE IN TEN MILLION?
THAT I'M HERE CAN LEGITIMATELY BE CALLED A MIRACLE. AND THAT'S HOW I VIEW IT. A GIFT FROM GOD. AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE HIS WILL.
OH, YEAH... MY NAME IS AARON FRYE, AND I MOST HUMBLY AND GRATEFULLY ACCEPT ANY AND ALL RISKS.

YOU UNBELIEVABLE BASTARD.

A FOOTBALL PLAYER KNOWS HE MAY SUFFER DEBILITATING INJURIES. BUT HE CHOOSES TO PLAY, KNOWING THE AVERAGE CAREER LASTS ONLY *THREE YEARS.*
WE OFFER FREE HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION AND HOUSING FOR OUR RECRUITS AND THEIR FAMILIES FOR *LIFE.*
FOOTBALL PLAYERS AREN'T GOING UP AGAINST *MONSTERS* WHO CAN TEAR THEM APART WITH THEIR *MINDS.* THESE ROOKIES'LL GET SLAUGHTERED ON THEIR *FIRST MISSION.*
NOT TO WORRY. WE'VE ARRANGED FOR VETERAN LEADERSHIP.
YOUR OLD FRIEND *MANIAC* HAS AGREED TO STAY ON AND LEAD THEM.
HEY CHARLIE! DIG THE SUPREME ATMAN DOING ITS THING, MAN!
ALL THESE LOVELY PEOPLE... WE'RE GOING TO TURN THEM ON TO THEIR OWN TRANSCENDENT SELVES!
I MIGHT BE STATING THE OBVIOUS HERE.
BUT YOU CAN SEE HE'S *INSANE.*
Whoa. TV IS FOREVER. RIDING ON THE HIGH-POWERED RADIO-FREQUENCY TRANSMITTER'S WAVE.
THAT'S US, MAN. ETERNAL SYNDICATION!
HE HAS DECADES OF EXPERIENCE. AND HE'S THE BEST WE'VE GOT.
WELL... THE BEST THAT'S WILLING TO SERVE.
YOU KNOW HOW OBVIOUS YOU'RE BEING, RIGHT?
AM I HOPING YOU'LL RECONSIDER? OF COURSE.
YOU'RE A NATIONAL TREASURE, MAJOR PALMER. WE'D BE LUCKY TO HAVE YOU.
AS WOULD MANIAC... AND, OF COURSE, CAROL JARDINE IN OUR LIFELINE DEPARTMENT.
YOUR PRESENCE ONLY IMPROVES THEIR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL.
BUT, OF COURSE, THIS IS AMERICA.
YOU *ALWAYS* HAVE A *CHOICE.*


MANIAC, HOW YOU DOING, MAN?
YOU KNOW ME, GUNSLINGER. JUST TRYING TO DO MY BEST TO BE AN INSTRUMENT OF THE UNIVERSE.

YOU'RE PROBABLY THE LAST PERSON ABOVE GROUND WHO STILL CALLS ME "GUNSLINGER."
CHARLIE'S RULE NUMBER ONE: GUNS FOR OFFENSE, POWERS FOR DEFENSE, UNTIL YOU AIN'T GOT NO OTHER OPTION.

WE ALL WOULDA CASHED IT IN OUR FIRST DAY, AND PLENTY OF TIMES AFTER THAT, IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU, BRAH.
YOU ALWAYS LOOKED OUT FOR US.

LISTEN, PAL... YOU DON'T MIND IF I TAKE COMMAND FOR A WHILE, DO YOU?
I KNEW YOU WOULD. IT WAS INEVITABLE. YOU'RE H.A.R.D.CORPS. AND H.A.R.D.CORPS IS YOU.
YOU CAN'T FIGHT THE PATH YOUR KARMA'S CARVED OUT FOR YOU.

YEAH.
I'M STARTING TO FIGURE OUT KARMA'S A REAL BITCH.

NNRRRR--
NEARLY THERE.
JUST A MOMENT LONGER...

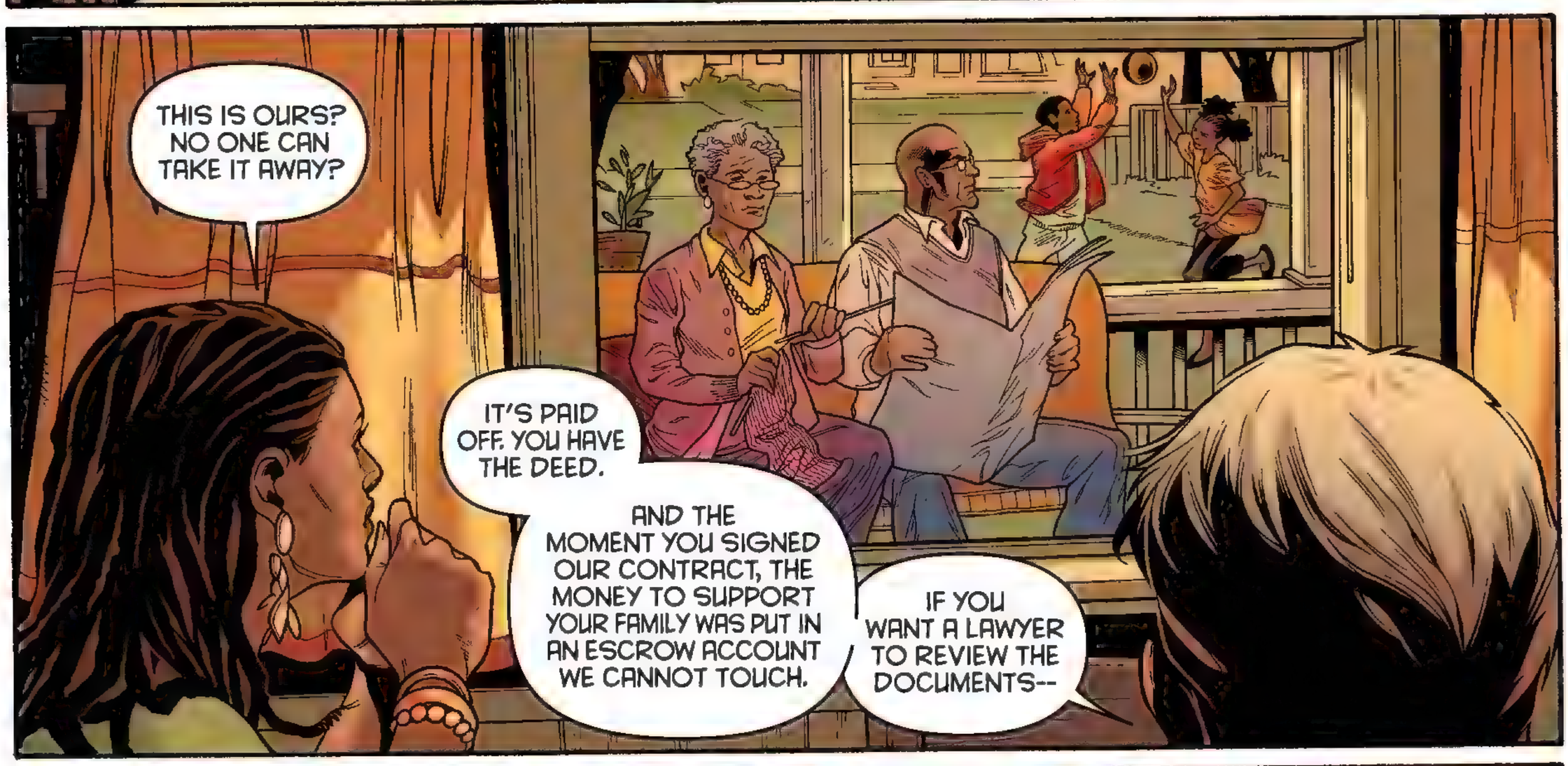
NNEEE-AAAGH!
SQUITT
THERE WE ARE. EXCELLENT.

UHHHH...
THIS SHOULD PROVIDE *ENDLESS* ENLIGHTENMENT.
DR. LEFF, I THINK THAT PAINKILLER WOULD BE APPROPRIATE NOW. WE DON'T WANT THIS MAN SUFFERING UNDULY.
I'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE MYSELF, BLOODSHOT. PROXIMITY TO YOU WOULD BE DETRIMENTAL TO ANY FURTHER STUDY. BUT NEVER FEAR, I'LL BE BACK SOON ENOUGH TO FARM MORE OF THESE MIRACULOUS MACHINES.

TOGETHER...
...THERE IS *NO LIMIT* TO WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE.

ONE MONTH AGO.
THE CAR'S READY. FROM THIS POINT FORWARD, EVERYTHING YOU SEE AND EXPERIENCE IS COVERED BY THE N.D.A.

YOU CAN DISCUSS IT WITH *NO ONE* OUTSIDE P.R.S.--NOT YOUR FAMILY, NOT--
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?


THIS IS OURS? NO ONE CAN TAKE IT AWAY?
IT'S PAID OFF. YOU HAVE THE DEED.
AND THE MOMENT YOU SIGNED OUR CONTRACT, THE MONEY TO SUPPORT YOUR FAMILY WAS PUT IN AN ESCROW ACCOUNT WE CANNOT TOUCH.
IF YOU WANT A LAWYER TO REVIEW THE DOCUMENTS--

AH.
SORRY. IT'S JUST... I GOT A MOTHER WITH DIABETES, A DADDY WITH EMPHYSEMA. TWO KIDS WHOSE FATHER THINKS CHILD SUPPORT IS A *SUGGESTION.*

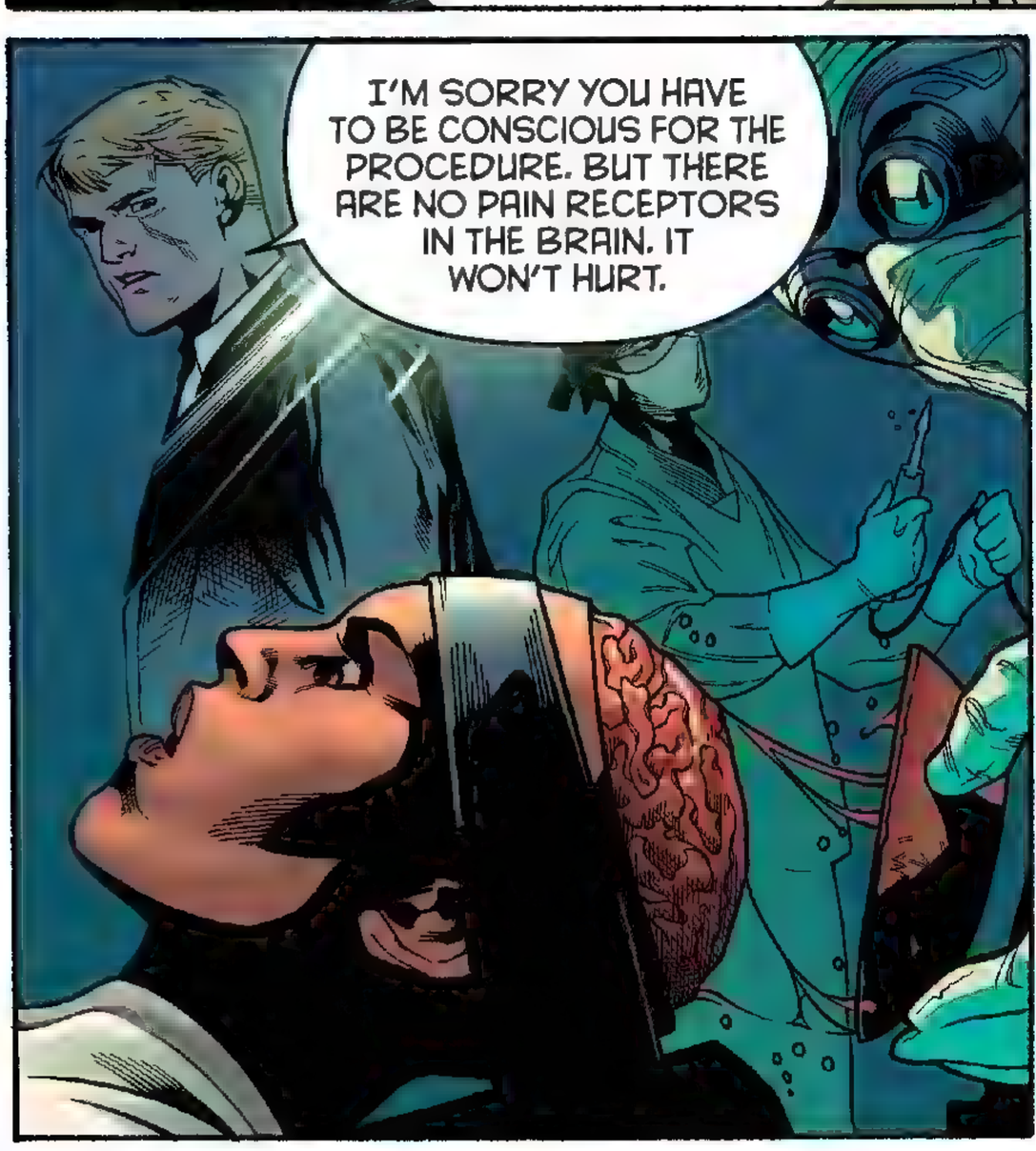
IN THEIR LAST SCHOOL, THE GANGS WERE ALREADY EYEING MY SON.

WHAT YOU DID FOR US... I CAN'T *EVER* THANK YOU ENOUGH.
BUT I'LL NEVER STOP TRYING.

WHEN ARE YOU COMING HOME?
SOON AS I CAN, BABY.
TAKE CARE OF YOUR BROTHER.

ANYTHING HAPPENS, TELL MY FAMILY I DIED IN AN ACCIDENT.
WE'VE BEEN DOING THIS SURGERY FOR DECADES. THERE'S *SOME* RISK, BUT WHEN THERE *ARE* COMPLICATIONS, THEY'RE USUALLY CAUSED BY STRESS.
SO I NEED YOU TO RELAX. BE THE ROCK YOU ARE FOR YOUR FAMILY.

SHOW ME THE STRENGTH THAT MADE ME FAST-TRACK YOU... AND GIVE YOU THE CALL SIGN "*GRANITE.*"


I'M SORRY YOU HAVE TO BE CONSCIOUS FOR THE PROCEDURE. BUT THERE ARE NO PAIN RECEPTORS IN THE BRAIN. IT WON'T HURT.

AFTERWARDS, I'M AFRAID...
...WILL BE DIFFERENT.
VREE SHNK

TWO WEEKS AGO.
EEAAAGGHH!
YOU'RE DOING GREAT. PUSH THROUGH IT.
THE FIRST TIME IS THE WORST. YOUR BODY WILL BUILD A TOLERANCE.
NNN! I C-CAN'T... AAAA!
FIGHT PAST THE PAIN, GRANITE. I KNOW YOU CAN DO IT. REMEMBER WHAT WE PRACTICED. JUST SAY THE WORDS.
THINK OF YOUR KIDS AND SAY THE WORDS.
Luh...Luh... LIFELINE...
G-GIVE ME...FLIGHT.
Oh...
OH!
PRAISE GOD.

NOW.
PRAISE HIS NAME.

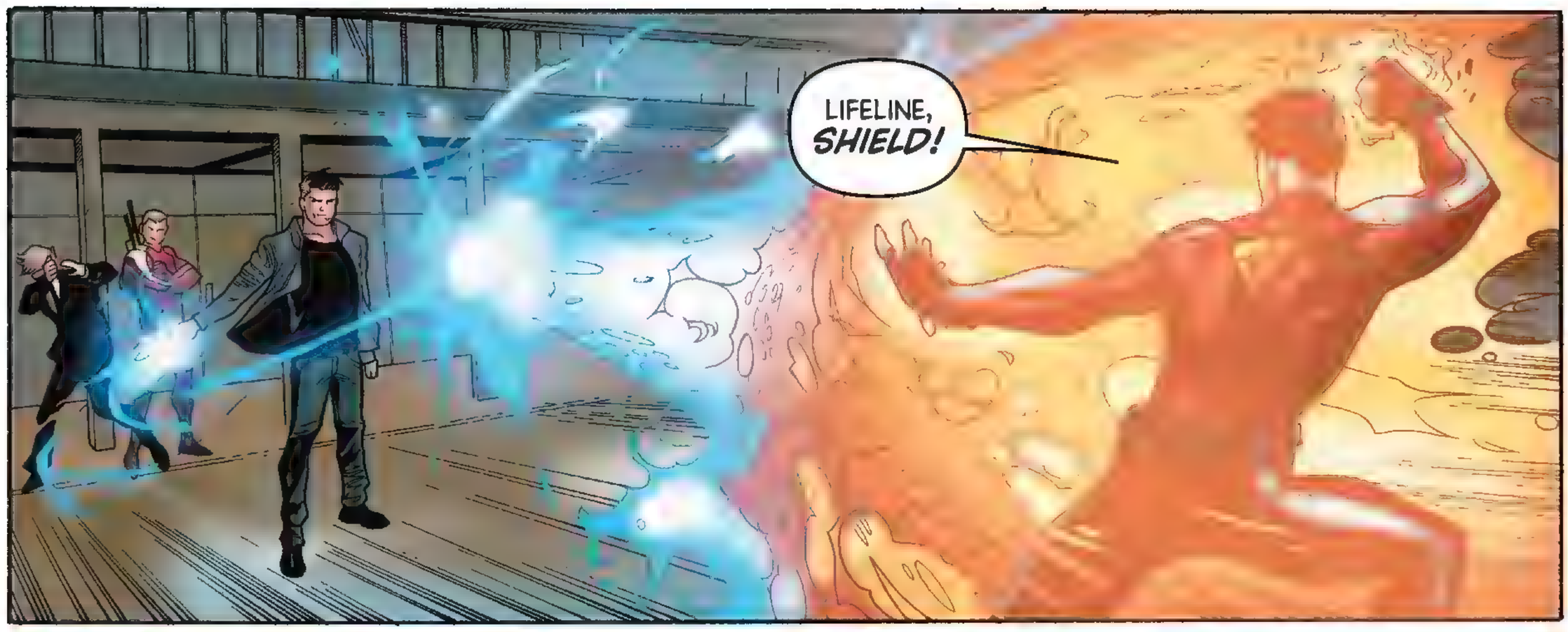
LIFELINE.
I'M OUT OF THE CHAIR. YOU CAN CALL ME *CAROL.*
UNLESS YOU'RE BEING PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE, WHICH ISN'T LIKE YOU.
WELL... THE "*PASSIVE*" PART.

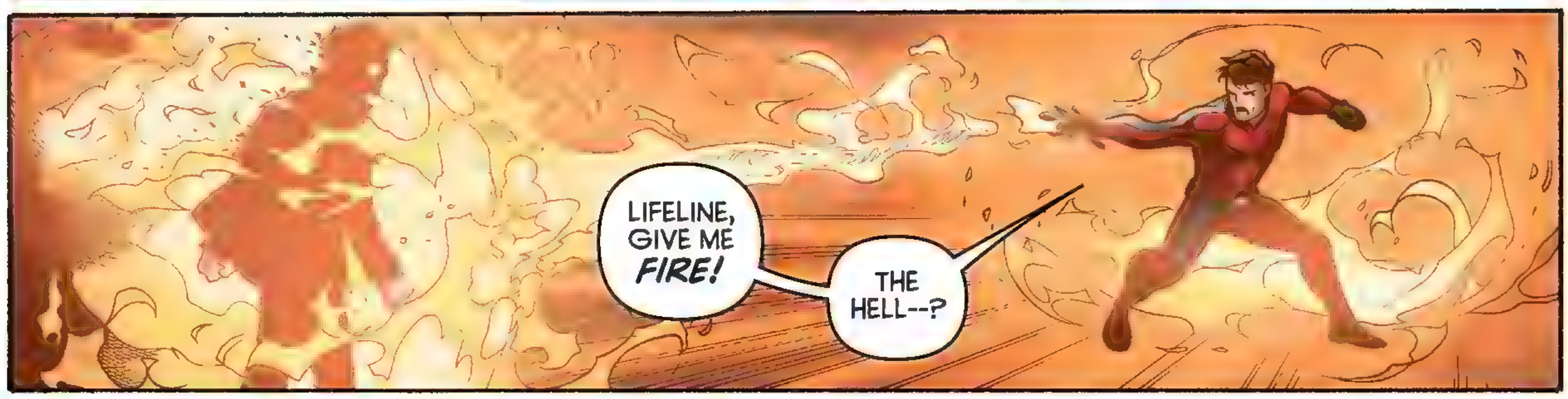
WALKING AWAY WAS THE BEST THING YOU EVER DID. WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO YOURSELF, CHARLIE?
I'M GOING TO WAR WITH THESE PEOPLE. I NEED TO KNOW THEM.
I NEED TO KNOW WHY THEY DECIDED TO THROW THEIR LIVES AWAY.

THE SAME REASONS *YOU* DID. HONOR. DUTY. DESPERATION. YOUTH. IGNORANCE. AND THE FACT THAT EVERYONE HERE IS DAMAGED, CHARLIE. LONG BEFORE WE PUT MACHINES IN ANYBODY'S BRAINS.
IS THAT HOW YOU SLEEP AT NIGHT? BY JUSTIFYING THIS CRAP?

YOU COULDN'T FIX IT BEFORE. P.R.S., H.A.R.D.CORPS, YOURSELF, ME... ANY OF IT. AND YOU CAN'T NOW.
BUT THIS TIME I KNOW BETTER THAN TO THINK I CAN STOP YOU FROM TRYING.

LIFELINE, GIVE ME *ARC!*
LIFELINE, GIVE ME--
--NEURAL SPIKE!
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
WHY AREN'T THEY ARMED? AT THEIR LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE, THEY SHOULD HAVE SHIELDS ON AS A DEFAULT. USE *GUNS* FOR OFFENSE.
RIGHT NOW WE'RE TRYING TO FAMILIARIZE THEM WITH ALL SEVENTEEN LIFELINE ABILITIES.
DON'T. HAVE EACH PICK ONE OR TWO TO SPECIALIZE IN. NO WAY CAN THEY HANDLE MORE THAN THAT COMPETENTLY IN THE TIME WE HAVE.
THEY'RE LIKE KIDS LEARNING TO WALK. TREAT 'EM THAT WAY.
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, SIR, BUT I'D PREFER TO DECIDE WHAT I CAN HANDLE.
OH YEAH?
LET'S GO A ROUND.
LIFELINE, SEQUENCE FOUR.


LIFELINE, SHIELD!

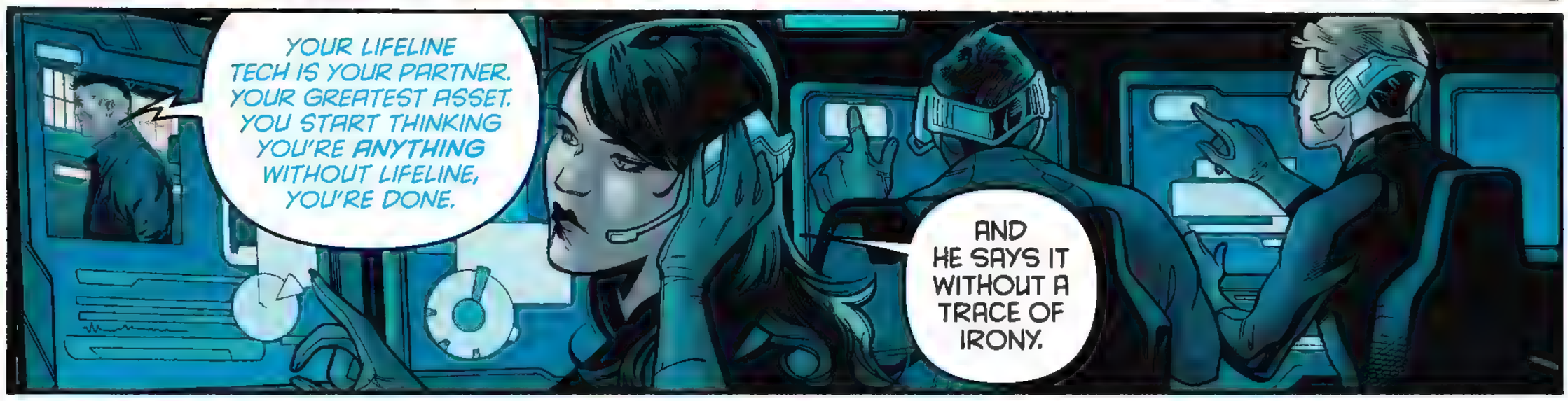

LIFELINE, GIVE ME FIRE!
THE HELL--?

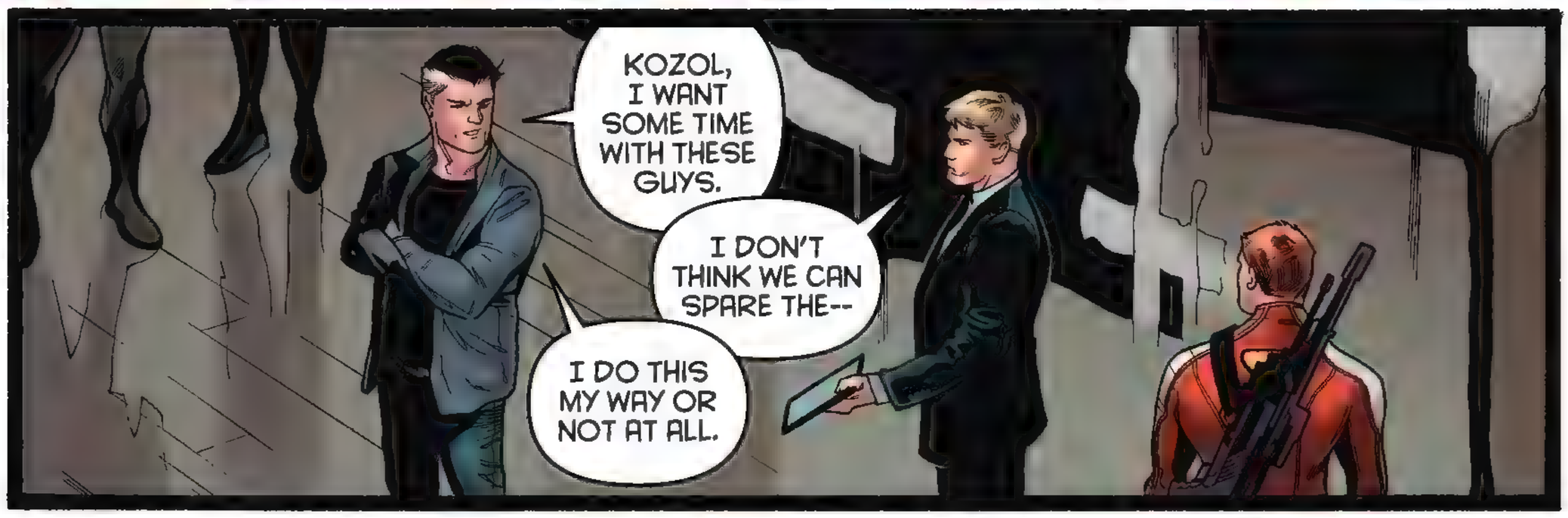
THIS ISN'T ABOUT POWERS.
NNAAH!

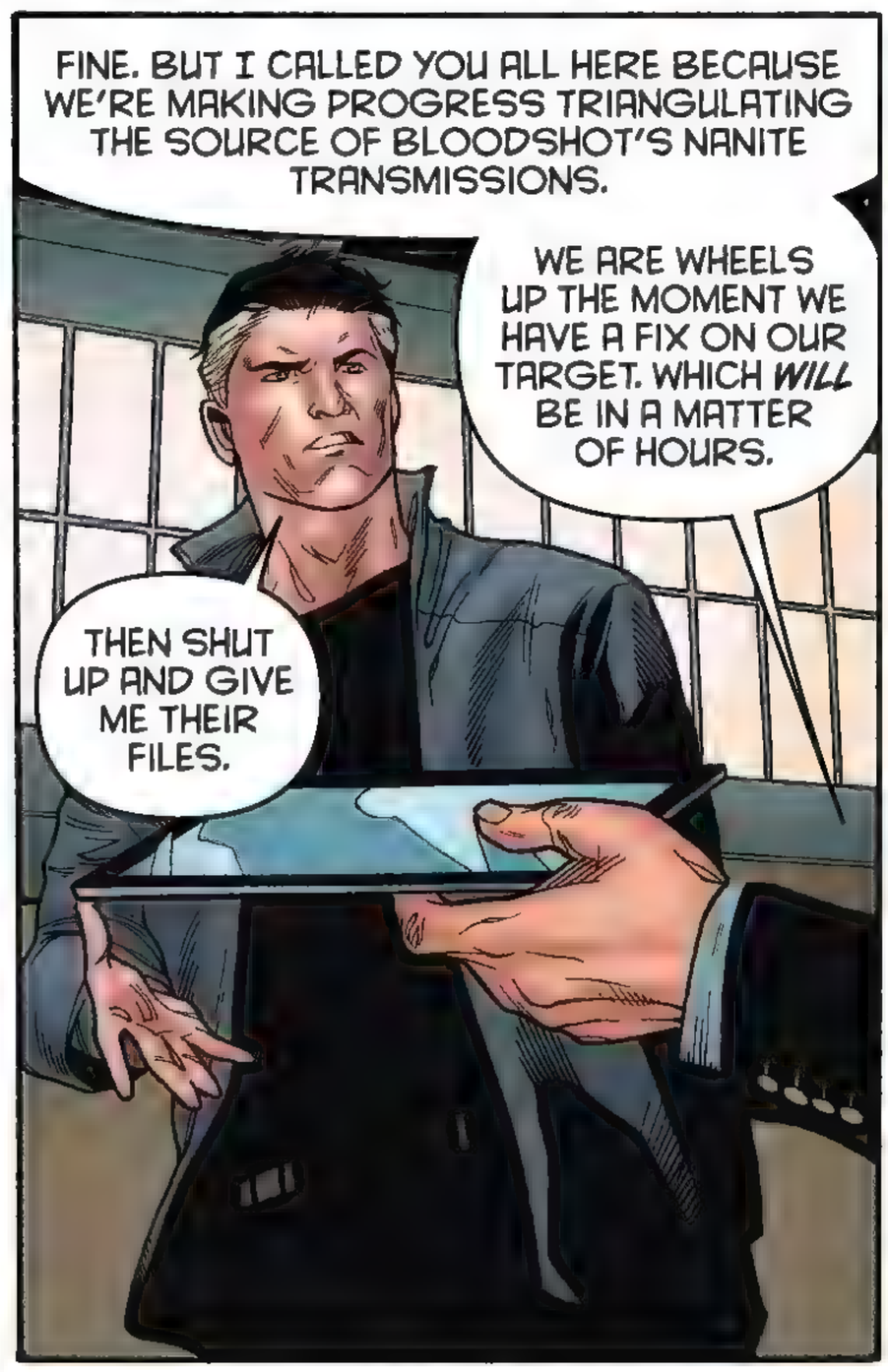
YOU RELY ON THE POWERS, YOU END UP DEAD. YOU HEAR ME, SHOWBOAT?
POINT MADE, MAJOR. TRUTHS TRANSMITTED.
PALMER, YOU DAMAGE THAT MAN YOU'RE REPAYING MY INVESTMENT.

P-PALMER? MAJOR CHARLES PALMER?
THE O O.G.?
AND YOUR C.O.
CAN WE CUT THE CRAP AND GET TO WORK, OR DOES ANYONE ELSE WANT TO SWING THEIR JIMMY?

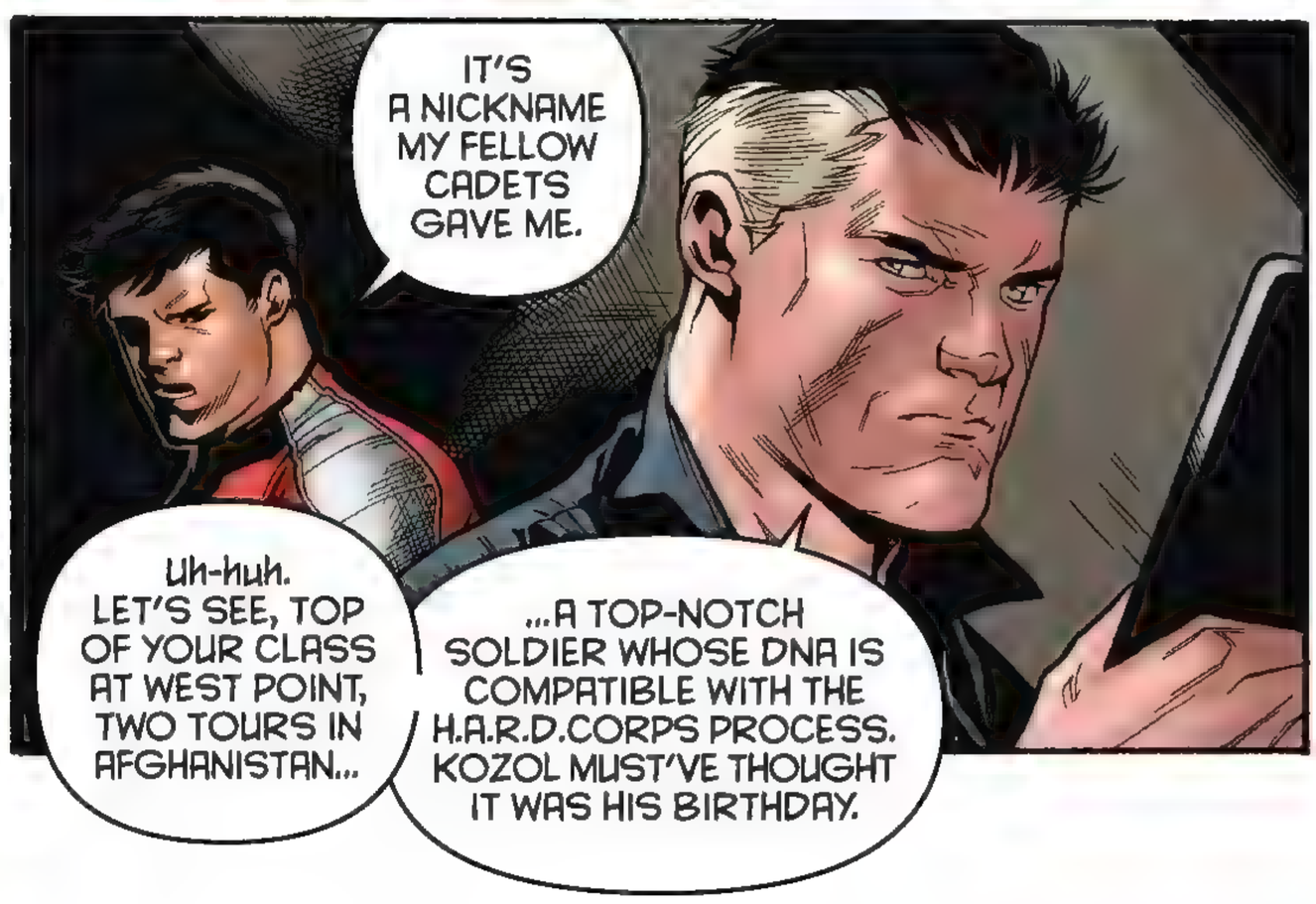
SIR, NO DISRESPECT WAS MEANT. I HAD NO IDEA. HOW--HOW'D YOU DO THAT? SWITCH POWERS WITHOUT ASKING FOR IT?
I DID ASK. "SEQUENCE FOUR."
A PRE-ARRANGED SERIES OF DOWNLOADS. YOU'LL WANT TO COME UP WITH YOUR OWN.

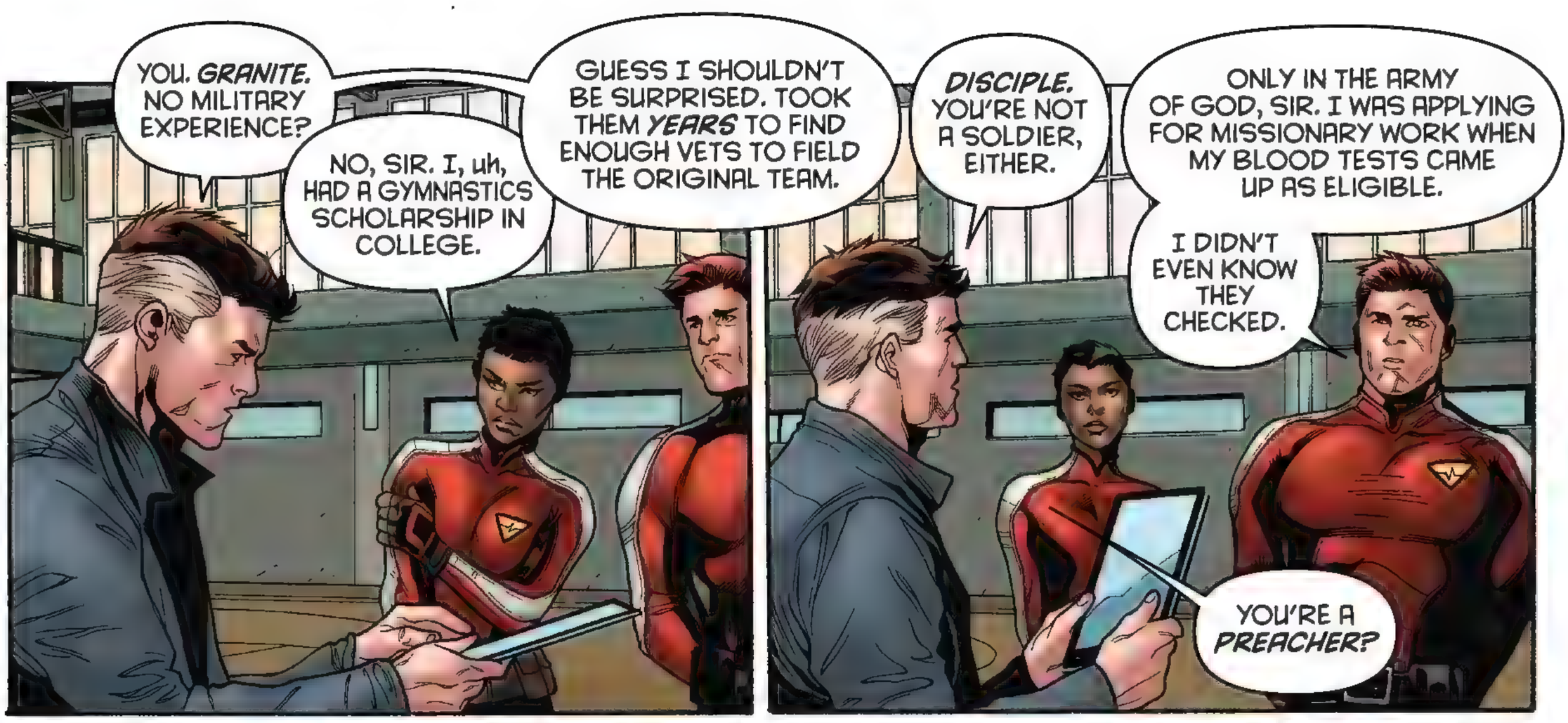

YOUR LIFELINE TECH IS YOUR PARTNER. YOUR GREATEST ASSET. YOU START THINKING YOU'RE ANYTHING WITHOUT LIFELINE, YOU'RE DONE.
AND HE SAYS IT WITHOUT A TRACE OF IRONY.

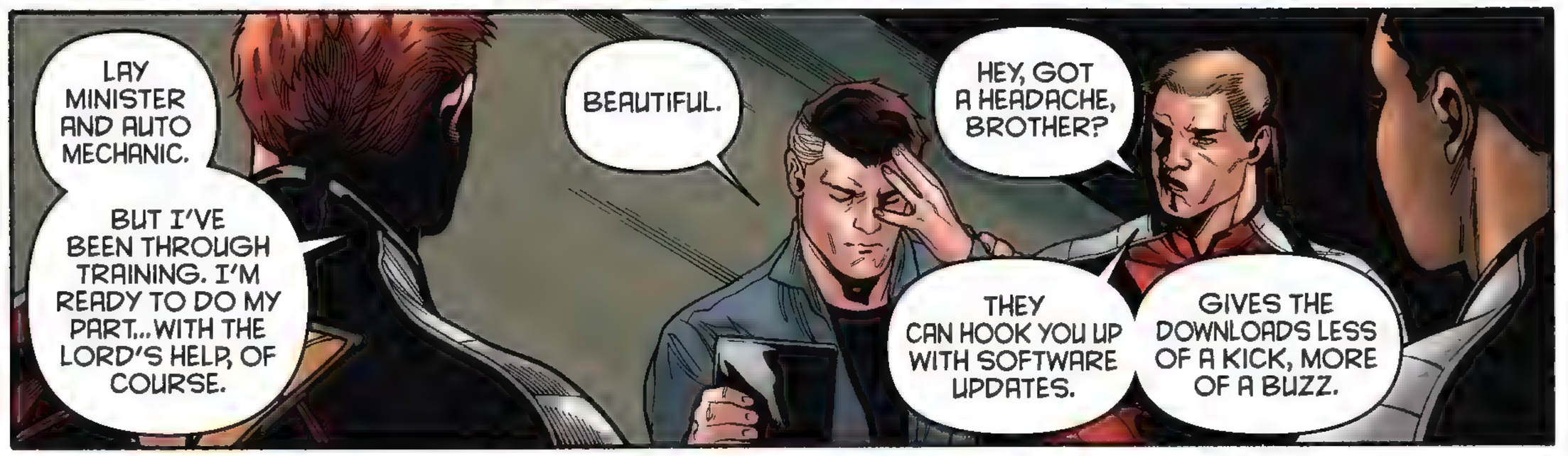

KOZOL, I WANT SOME TIME WITH THESE GUYS.
I DON'T THINK WE CAN SPARE THE--
I DO THIS MY WAY OR NOT AT ALL.


FINE. BUT I CALLED YOU ALL HERE BECAUSE WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS TRIANGULATING THE SOURCE OF BLOODSHOT'S NANITE TRANSMISSIONS.
WE ARE WHEELS UP THE MOMENT WE HAVE A FIX ON OUR TARGET. WHICH WILL BE IN A MATTER OF HOURS.
THEN SHUT UP AND GIVE ME THEIR FILES.

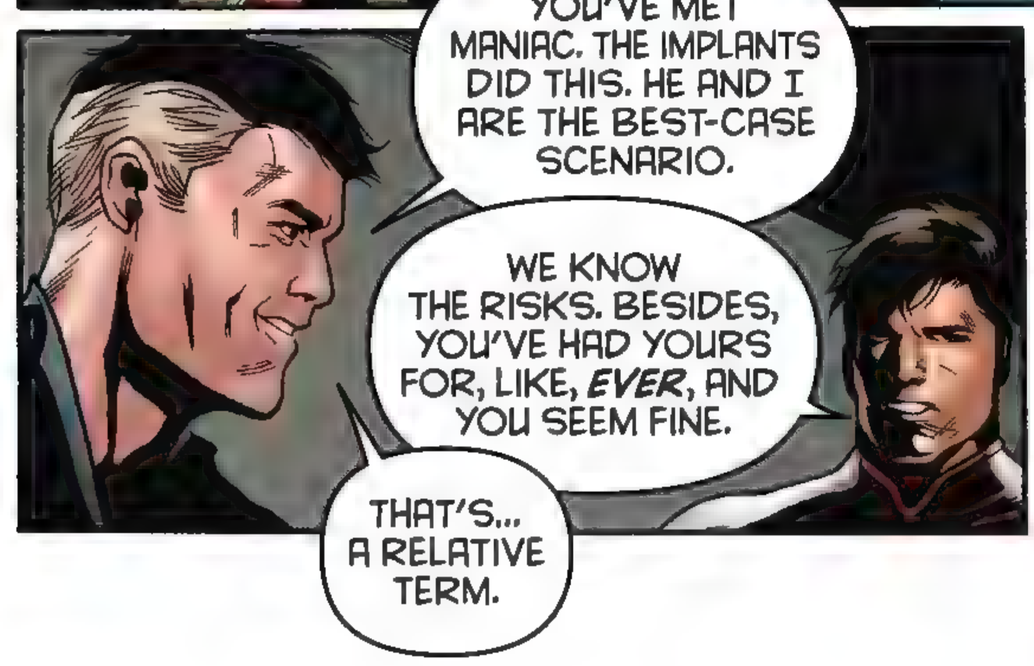
WE'RE REALLY GOING AFTER BLOODSHOT?
THEN WE SHOULD BE TRAINING, NOT TALKING.
YEAH, WE'RE EXTRACTING HIM. BUT WE'LL GET TO THAT.
"SUPERSTAR." IMPRESSED WITH OURSELVES, ARE WE?


IT'S A NICKNAME MY FELLOW CADETS GAVE ME.
UH-HUH. LET'S SEE, TOP OF YOUR CLASS AT WEST POINT, TWO TOURS IN AFGHANISTAN...
...A TOP-NOTCH SOLDIER WHOSE DNA IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE H.A.R.D.CORPS PROCESS. KOZOL MUST'VE THOUGHT IT WAS HIS BIRTHDAY.

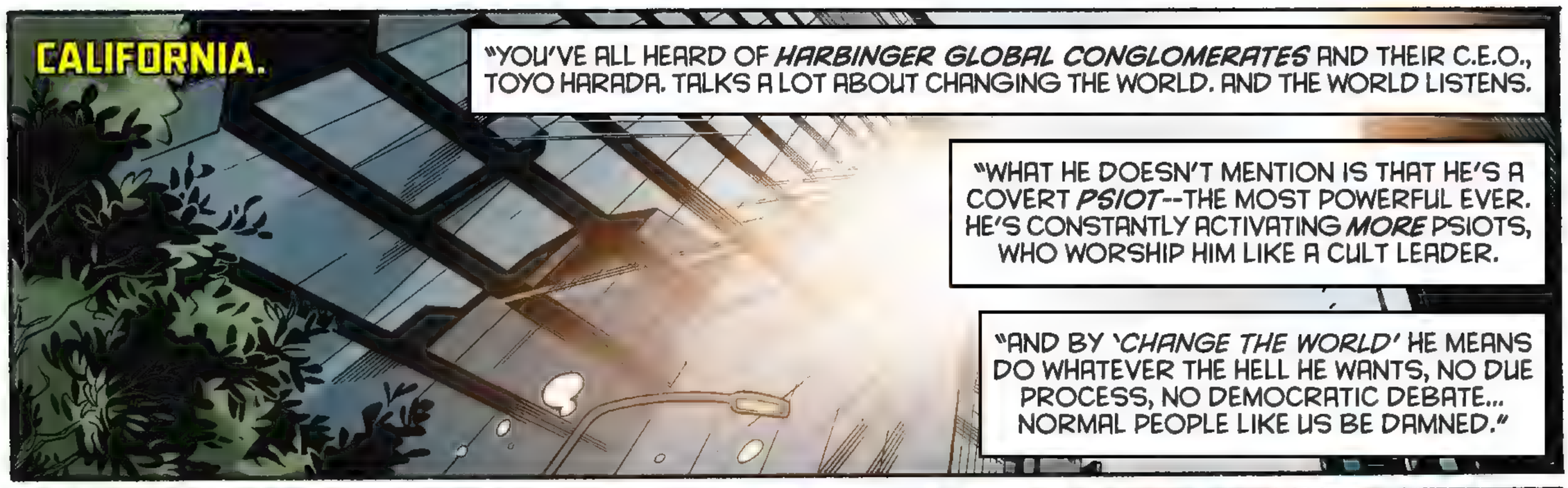

YOU. GRANITE. NO MILITARY EXPERIENCE?
NO, SIR. I, uh, HAD A GYMNASTICS SCHOLARSHIP IN COLLEGE.
GUESS I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED. TOOK THEM YEARS TO FIND ENOUGH VETS TO FIELD THE ORIGINAL TEAM.
DISCIPLE. YOU'RE NOT A SOLDIER, EITHER.
ONLY IN THE ARMY OF GOD, SIR. I WAS APPLYING FOR MISSIONARY WORK WHEN MY BLOOD TESTS CAME UP AS ELIGIBLE.
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEY CHECKED.
YOU'RE A PREACHER?


LAY MINISTER AND AUTO MECHANIC.
BUT I'VE BEEN THROUGH TRAINING. I'M READY TO DO MY PART...WITH THE LORD'S HELP, OF COURSE.
BEAUTIFUL.
HEY, GOT A HEADACHE, BROTHER?
THEY CAN HOOK YOU UP WITH SOFTWARE UPDATES.
GIVES THE DOWNLOADS LESS OF A KICK, MORE OF A BUZZ.

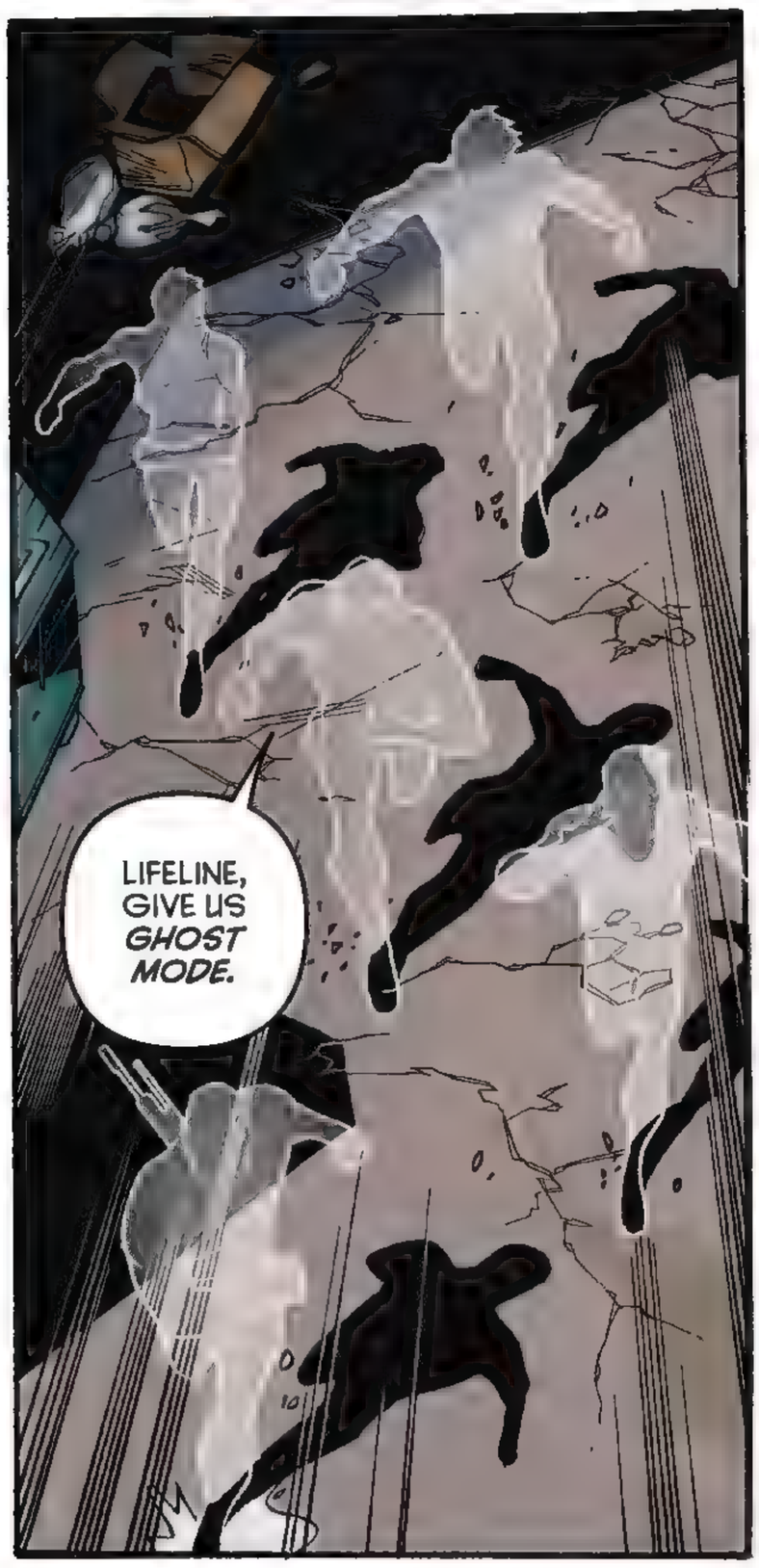
ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE WALKING AROUND WITH TECH IN YOUR HEAD FROM THE DAYS WHEN CELL PHONES WERE THE SIZE OF A BRICK.
HOW MUCH RADIATION HAVE YOU ABSORBED?
THEY'VE TWEAKED IT A TIME OR TWO. BUT THE OUTCOME'S THE SAME.
THIS IS WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO YOUR BRAIN. EACH USE OF YOUR POWERS REROUTES NEURAL PATHWAYS.
WHERE ARE THE WORMS? I KNOW THEY'RE IN HERE, I CAN FEEL THEM CRAWLING. ECOSYSTEM ECSTASY. TURN OVER THE LOAM AND THOUGHTS BLOOM. SYMBIOSIS... YEAH...

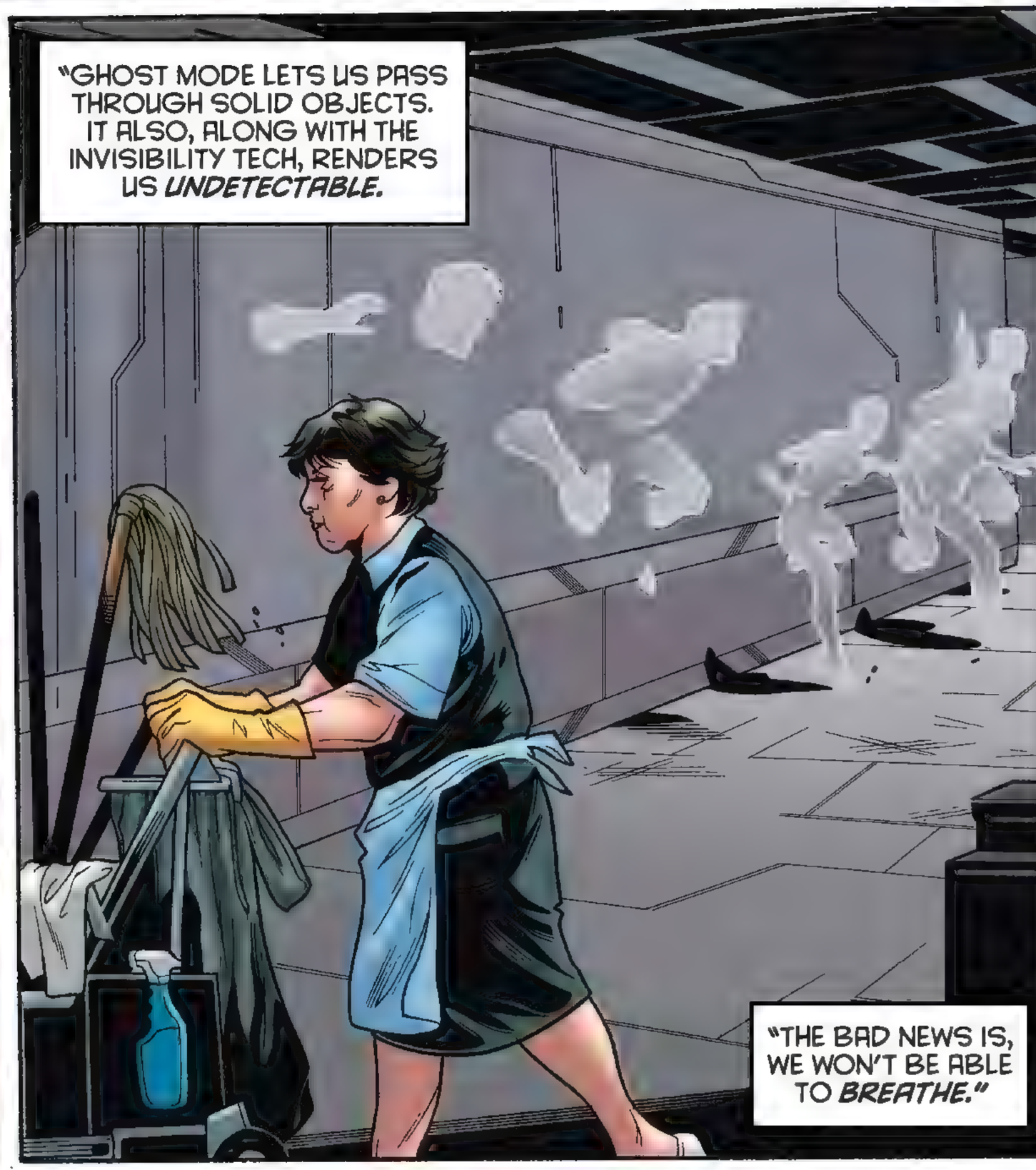

YOU'VE MET MANIAC. THE IMPLANTS DID THIS. HE AND I ARE THE BEST-CASE SCENARIO.
WE KNOW THE RISKS. BESIDES, YOU'VE HAD YOURS FOR, LIKE, EVER, AND YOU SEEM FINE.
THAT'S... A RELATIVE TERM.

ALL DUE RESPECT, MAJOR...NONE OF US WANT TO DIE. BUT WE ALL KNOW WE COULD. AND WE ACCEPT THAT.
ALL RIGHT. THEN LET'S TALK ABOUT HOW THAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.


CALIFORNIA.
"YOU'VE ALL HEARD OF *HARBINGER GLOBAL CONGLOMERATES* AND THEIR C.E.O., TOYO HARADA. TALKS A LOT ABOUT CHANGING THE WORLD. AND THE WORLD LISTENS.
"WHAT HE DOESN'T MENTION IS THAT HE'S A COVERT *PSIOT*--THE MOST POWERFUL EVER. HE'S CONSTANTLY ACTIVATING *MORE* PSIOTS, WHO WORSHIP HIM LIKE A CULT LEADER.
"AND BY '*CHANGE THE WORLD*' HE MEANS DO WHATEVER THE HELL HE WANTS, NO DUE PROCESS, NO DEMOCRATIC DEBATE... NORMAL PEOPLE LIKE US BE DAMNED."

SWEET. THIS IS SOME *HARRY POTTER* STUFF RIGHT HERE.
WAY PAST THAT. THE P.R.S. TECH BENDS LIGHT RAYS AROUND US, BUT IF WE WERE JUST INVISIBLE, THEY'D DETECT OUR BREATH AND BODY HEAT.
SILENT RUNNING FROM HERE ON OUT.


LIFELINE, GIVE US *GHOST MODE.*


"GHOST MODE LETS US PASS THROUGH SOLID OBJECTS. IT ALSO, ALONG WITH THE INVISIBILITY TECH, RENDERS US *UNDETECTABLE.*
"THE BAD NEWS IS, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO *BREATHE.*"

NOW.

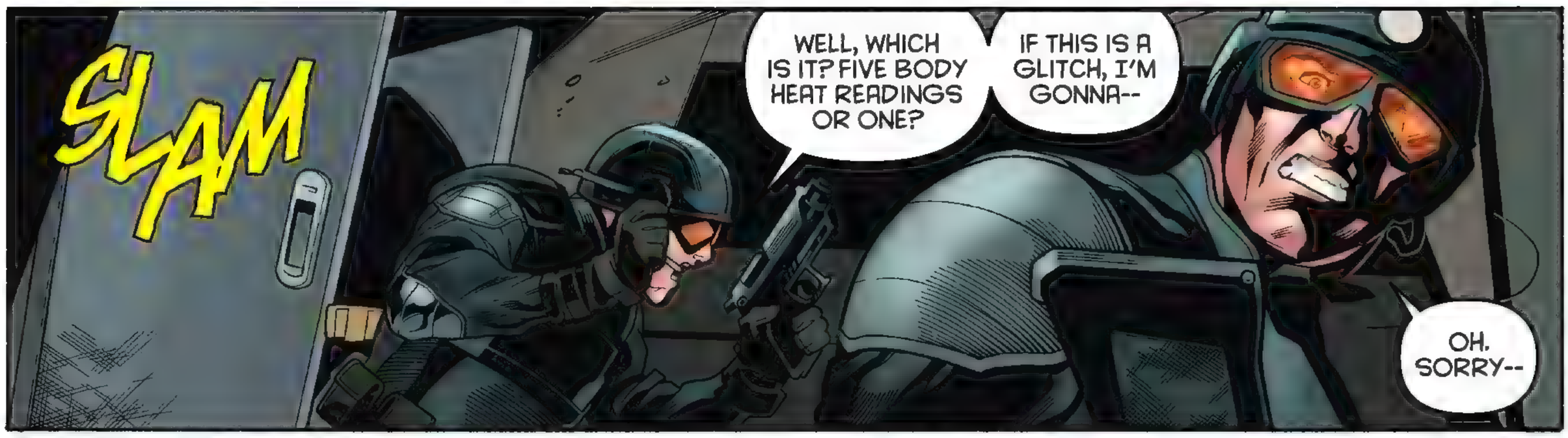
"THE CLOCK STARTS TICKING."

PHAAA!

THEY'LL BE HERE ANY SECOND.

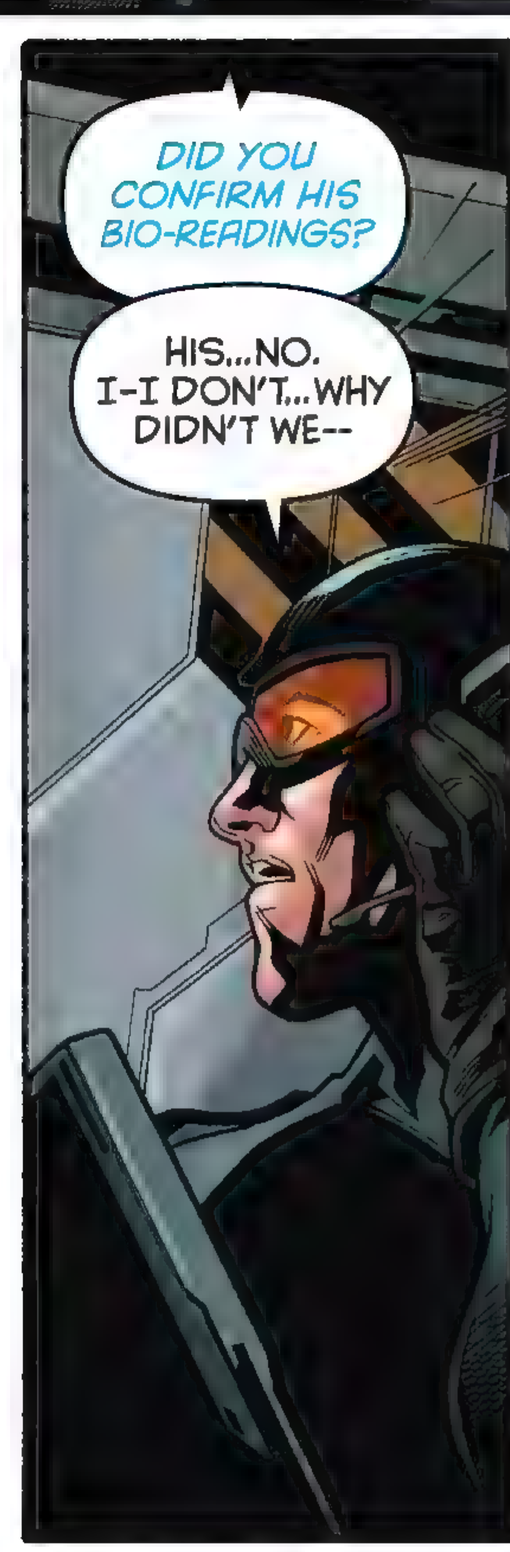
IF WE WANT TO LIVE ANY LONGER THAN THAT, WE NEED BLOODSHOT.

LIFELINE... SEQUENCE H.


SLAM
WELL, WHICH IS IT? FIVE BODY HEAT READINGS OR ONE?
IF THIS IS A GLITCH, I'M GONNA--
OH. SORRY--

MR. HARADA. WE WERE TOLD THIS SECTOR'S OFF-LIMITS.
THERE'S BEEN A PROBLEM. I NEED TO SEE BLOODSHOT IMMEDIATELY.
OF COURSE, SIR. WE'LL ESCORT YOU.
"THE SUIT'S HOLOGRAM PROJECTION, COUPLED WITH THE MENTAL INFLUENCE I'LL BE USING IN SUGGESTION MODE, BUYS US A COUPLE OF MINUTES AT MOST."

NO. HE'S TOO DANGEROUS. I'LL HANDLE IT MYSELF.
REMAIN HERE. SEE THAT NO ONE BUT ME COMES THROUGH THIS DOOR.
THIS IS STRONGHOLD. REPORT.
FALSE ALARM, SIR. IT WAS MR. HARADA.

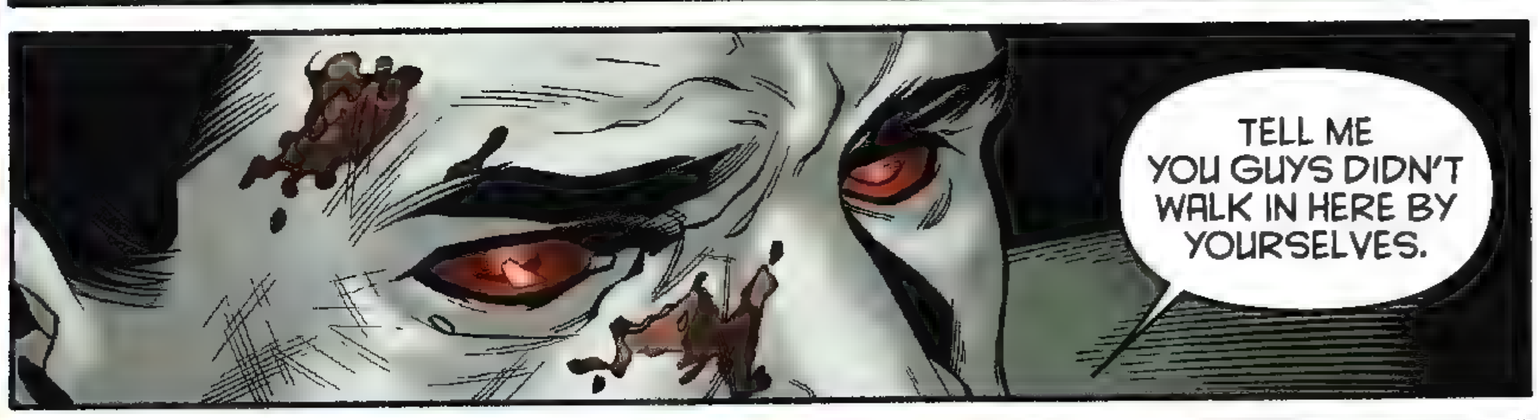

DID YOU CONFIRM HIS BIO-READINGS?
HIS...NO. I-I DON'T...WHY DIDN'T WE--

THAT WASN'T HARADA!

THEY'RE BURNING THROUGH!
SAFETIES OFF.
LIFELINE, GIVE EVERYONE BUT ME SHIELDS. GIVE ME...

...BREAKDOWN.

OKAY, BLOODSHOT. WE RESCUED YOU. TIME TO RETURN THE FAVOR.
CAN'T EVEN *STAND*...
...HARADA DID SOMETHING TO MY *NANITES*.

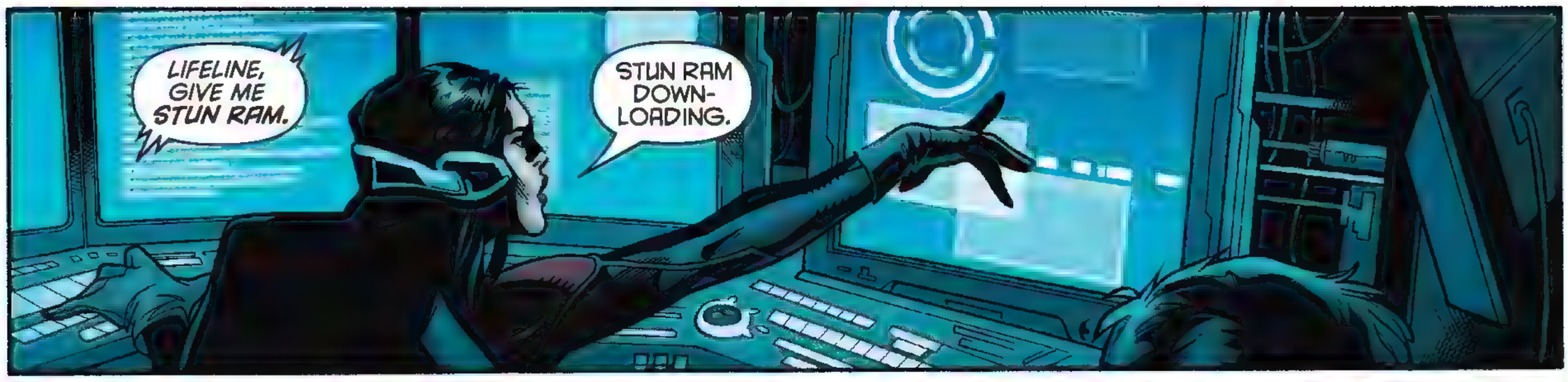

TELL ME YOU GUYS DIDN'T WALK IN HERE BY YOURSELVES.

BWHOOM

VALIANT
#15
CHRISTOS GAGE JOSHUA DYSART | EMANUELA LUPACCHINO | BRIAN REBER
BLOODSHOT®
AND H.A.R.D. CORPS
LUPACCHINO
BR

HARBINGER GLOBAL CONGLOMERATES, EL SEGUNDO.
CLEAR THE DEBRIS!
CODENAME: STRONGHOLD. DRAWS ENERGY FROM MASS, CAUSING MOLECULAR DECAY.
GET US IN THAT ROOM NOW!
YOU REALLY THINK THEY SURVIVED THE EXPLOSION, SIR?
WE HAVE TO ASSUME SO. H.A.R.D.CORPS HAS ACCESS TO PSI-SHIELDS. PLUS THEY'RE IN THERE WITH BLOODSHOT...
"...WHICH MAKES THIS A RED LEVEL THREAT."
HHH...WHO THE HELL... ARE YOU?
WE'RE THE GUYS SAVING YOU. PULL IT TOGETHER, WE NEED YOU ON YOUR FEET.
HERE-- HIGH-PROTEIN M.R.E.S., MODIFIED TO FEED YOUR BODY'S NANITES.
WON'T HELP. HARADA...DID SOMETHING.
NANITES...AREN'T WORKING RIGHT. I CAN'T...STAND.
THEN WE'RE SCREWED. 'CAUSE OUR CONTINGENCY PLAN DEPENDS ON YOU GETTING US OUT OF THIS ROOM ALIVE.
I SAID... I COULDN'T STAND.

I CAN STILL KILL.


LIFELINE, GIVE ME STUN RAM.
STUN RAM DOWN-LOADING.

MANIAC! GET US SOME PRIVACY.
COPY THAT, MAJOR. LIFELINE, GIVE ME...

DETONATION.
Bwla-dam

AGAIN. WHO THE HELL... ARE YOU?
I'M PALMER. MANIAC BLEW THE FLOOR.
LEFT TO RIGHT, THAT'S SUPERSTAR, GRANITE, AND DISCIPLE.
THEY'LL BE BACK. LET'S GHOST-MODE OUTTA HERE!
NOT AN OPTION FOR BLOODSHOT. BUT YOU'RE RIGHT...WE NEED TO EXFILTRATE. IF HARADA SHOWS UP...

"...IT'S GAME OVER."

INTEGRATION EXPERIMENT 119. HARADA, TOYO RECORDING.

FACT: BLOODSHOT'S NANITES HEAL NEARLY ANY INJURY...

...WHILE OUR MEDBOTS CAN ONLY STABILIZE THE INJURED AND TRANSPORT THEM TO HUMAN MEDICS.

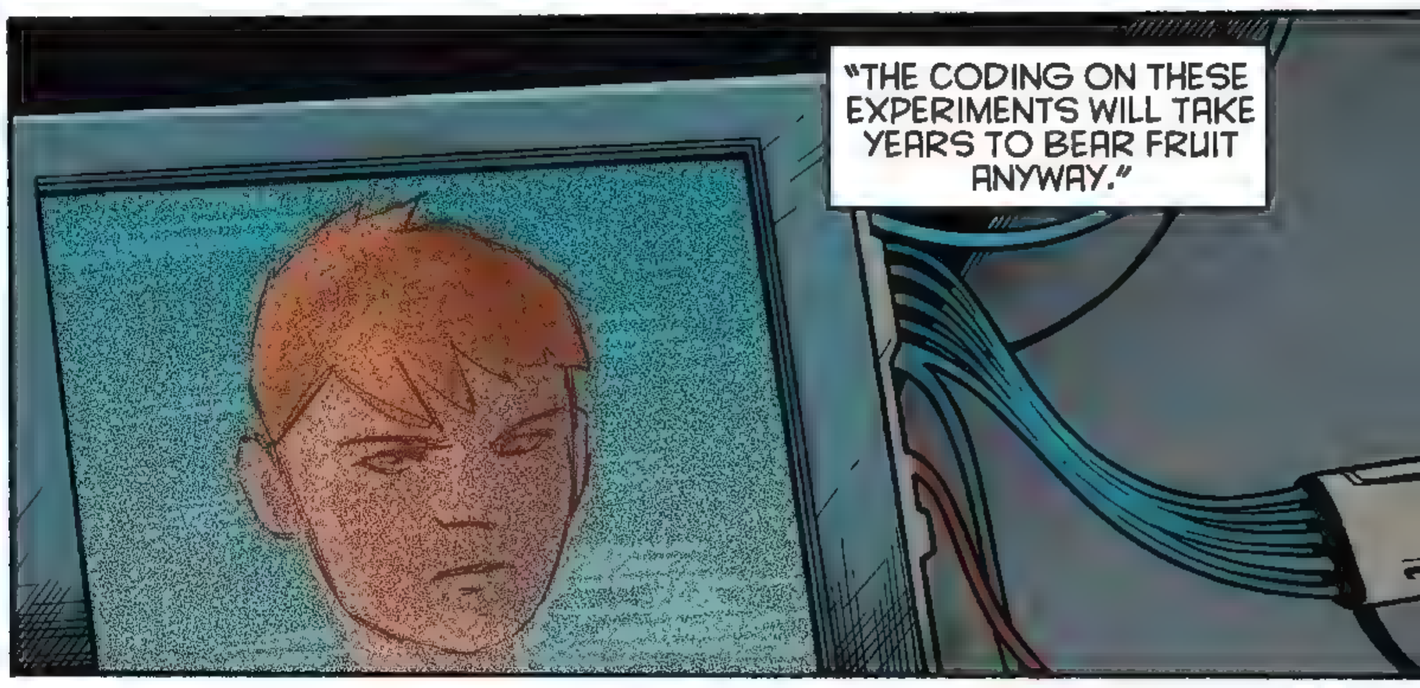
WORKING THESIS: COMBINING THE TWO PRESENTS THE GREATEST HUMANITARIAN POTENTIAL IN HUMAN HISTORY.

SUB-BASEMENT H.

EXPERIMENT: I'VE LINKED THE NANITES TO A TEST MED-BOT THROUGH A BIO-NEURAL COMPUTER.

MED-BOTS HAVE ALL THE A.I. OF A VIDEOGAME CHARACTER. THE NANITES ARE A *REVOLUTION* IN A.I.

BRIDGING THEIR OPERATING SYSTEMS IS A BIT LIKE GETTING ALIEN SPECIES TO COMMUNICATE.



NOW THAT I'M IN POSITION TO SNAP YOUR NECK, PALMER... I'M NOT STUPID. YOU GUYS ARE FROM *PROJECT RISING SPIRIT.* IF *ORECK* THINKS HE CAN BRAIN-WASH ME AGAIN--

ORECK'S IN THE WIND. GUY NAMED *KOZOL'S* IN CHARGE. AND I DON'T CARE IF YOU KILL, MARRY, OR SCREW HIM.

I'M TRYING TO GET *MY PEOPLE* OUT *ALIVE.* YOU WERE SOMETHING LIKE A SOLDIER ONCE. YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?

...

YEAH. I GUESS I DO.

WH-WHAT--?

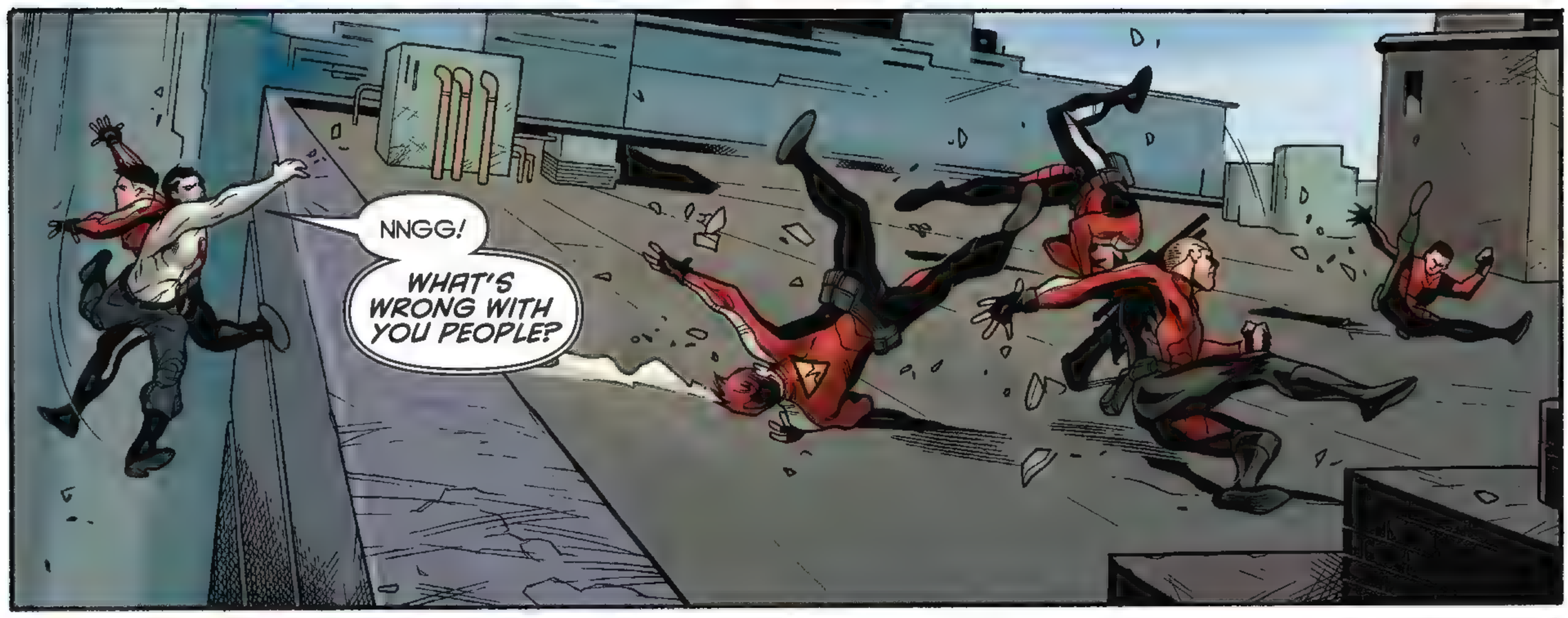
OH MY GOD.

WE'RE *SO HIGH...*

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THIS ISN'T *POSSIBLE!* HUMAN BEINGS CAN'T *DO* THIS!

WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE!



CODENAME: PANIC. ABLE TO PSYCHICALLY INDUCE PARALYZING FEAR IN OTHERS.

THIS IS PANIC. TARGETS LOCATED ON THE ROOF. SEND BACKUP. NOT SURE HOW LONG I CAN CONTROL THIS MANY.
L-LIFELINE... G-GIVE ME... GIVE ME...

NO.
JESUS...GIVE ME *STRENGTH.*
I SHALL FEAR NO EVIL!
BLAM BLAM BLAM

OUTSTANDING, DISCIPLE. *OUT-FREAKIN'-STANDING.*
LIFELINE, THIS IS SUPERSTAR. GIVE US ALL FLIGHT...

...OUR RIDE'S HERE.

BWOOOOOM
OH, HELL.
LIFELINE, CONDITION RED! SEND IN SKYHOOK, STAT!
WE WON'T MAKE IT. I'LL COVER.
MANIAC, I NEED YOU TO NOT BE CRAZY FOR TWO SECONDS. THAT'S HARADA.
I KNOW WHO HE IS. AND I KNOW WHO I AM.
I'VE KILLED KIDS, CHARLIE. THEY GAVE ME THE POWER OF A GOD AND I USED IT TO MURDER KIDS.
SOMETIMES MAYA'S A MERCY. I CAN'T WAIT TO FORGET THIS LIFE AND MOVE ON TO THE NEXT.
DON'T LET THEM TURN OUT LIKE US, CHARLIE.
LIFELINE, GIVE ME FIRE.
MANIAC!!

RAGNAROK!!
THANKS FOR RETURNING, SOLDIER.
I'VE NEVER HAD ACCESS TO A H.A.R.D.CORE NEURAL IMPLANT BEFORE. SHOULD BE FASCINATING STUDY.
SSHLIKK
IK

DAMN IT! WHY'D HE DO THAT? WORST BOSSFIGHT EVER!
THEY'LL ASSIGN ME A NEW ONE, RIGHT, MA'AM? I GET BACK IN THE GAME?
SHUT UP, SPITZ. TRY PRETENDING YOU HAVE FEELINGS. ALL STATIONS, SWITCH FROM FLIGHT TO SHIELDS ON MY MARK.
LIFELINE TO H.A.R.D.CORPS: STAND BY FOR SKYHOOK IN THREE...TWO... ONE...

...MARK.

HMM...

WHOOOMF
AH!

SELF-DESTRUCT TEN SECONDS AFTER TERMINATION OF LIFE SIGNS. THEY ARE NOTHING IF NOT INTENT ON PROTECTING THEIR PATENTS.
THEY'RE OUT OF RANGE. I'LL PREPARE THE TEAM FOR DEPLOYMENT--

DON'T BOTHER.
THE *NANITES* ARE THE TRUE PRIZE. ALL THOSE FOOLS MANAGED TO RETRIEVE...

"...IS THE *CRUMBLING PACKAGE* THEY CAME IN."

PROJECT RISING SPIRIT
RESEARCH FACILITY THETA.

BLOODSHOT. YOU'RE LOOKING A MITE PEAKED.

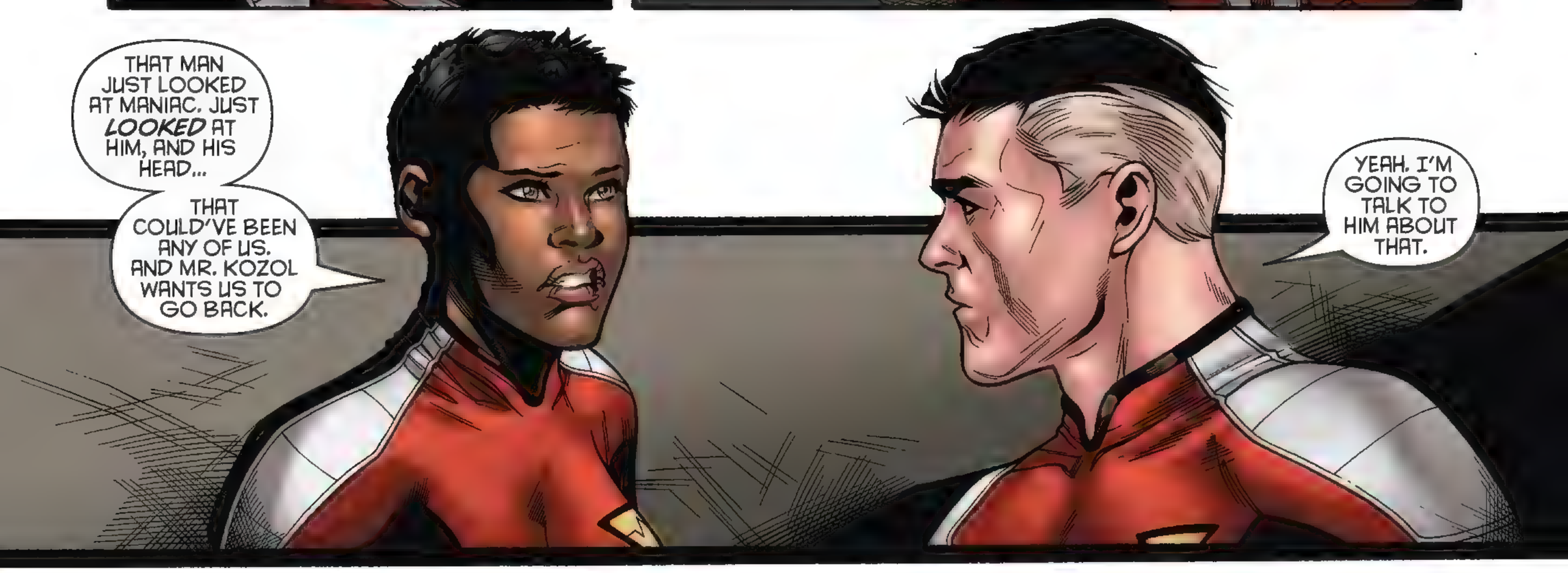
GO TAKE A FLYING *FWUHH!*

HE'S SEIZING!

AN HOUR LATER...
HEY. HOW YOU DOING, MAN?
HELL OF A JOB BACK THERE. FIRST KILL?
YES.
I'M NOT, LIKE, REAL TOUCHY-FEELY, BUT IF YOU NEED TO TALK, SAY THE WORD.
I REMEMBER MY FIRST. IT'S TOUGH. AND YOU BEING RELIGIOUS...

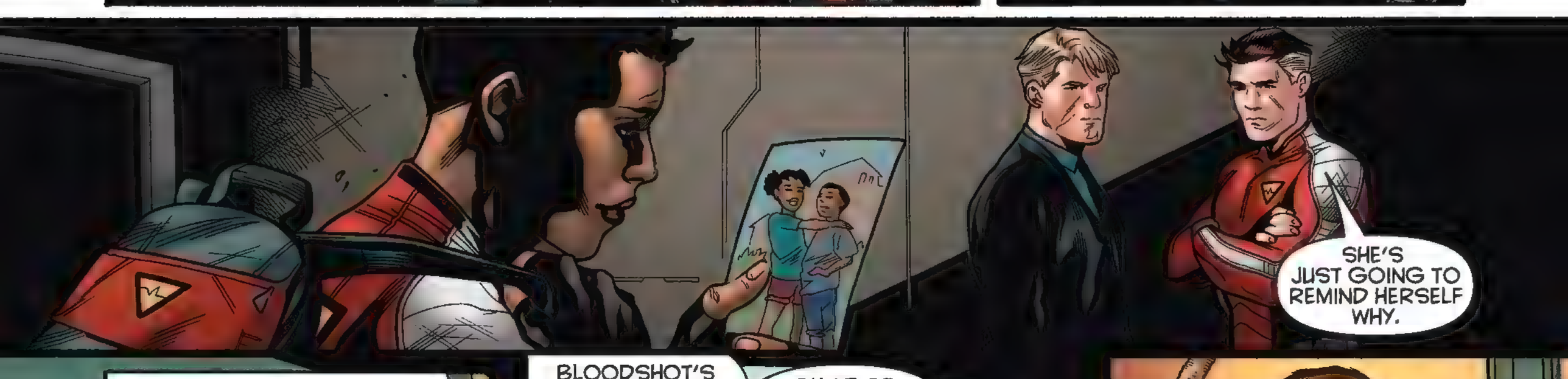
THANK YOU. BUT I'M FINE. IF I HADN'T ACTED, WE'D ALL BE DEAD.
I PRAYED ON IT. GOD TOLD ME IT WAS JUST. AND HE'S FORGIVEN ME.
OH. uh, WELL, THAT'S... GOOD.

IF YOU NEED TO TALK...
NO. NO THANKS.
ERICA? HOW YOU HOLDING UP?


THAT MAN JUST LOOKED AT MANIAC. JUST LOOKED AT HIM, AND HIS HEAD...
THAT COULD'VE BEEN ANY OF US. AND MR. KOZOL WANTS US TO GO BACK.
YEAH. I'M GOING TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT THAT.

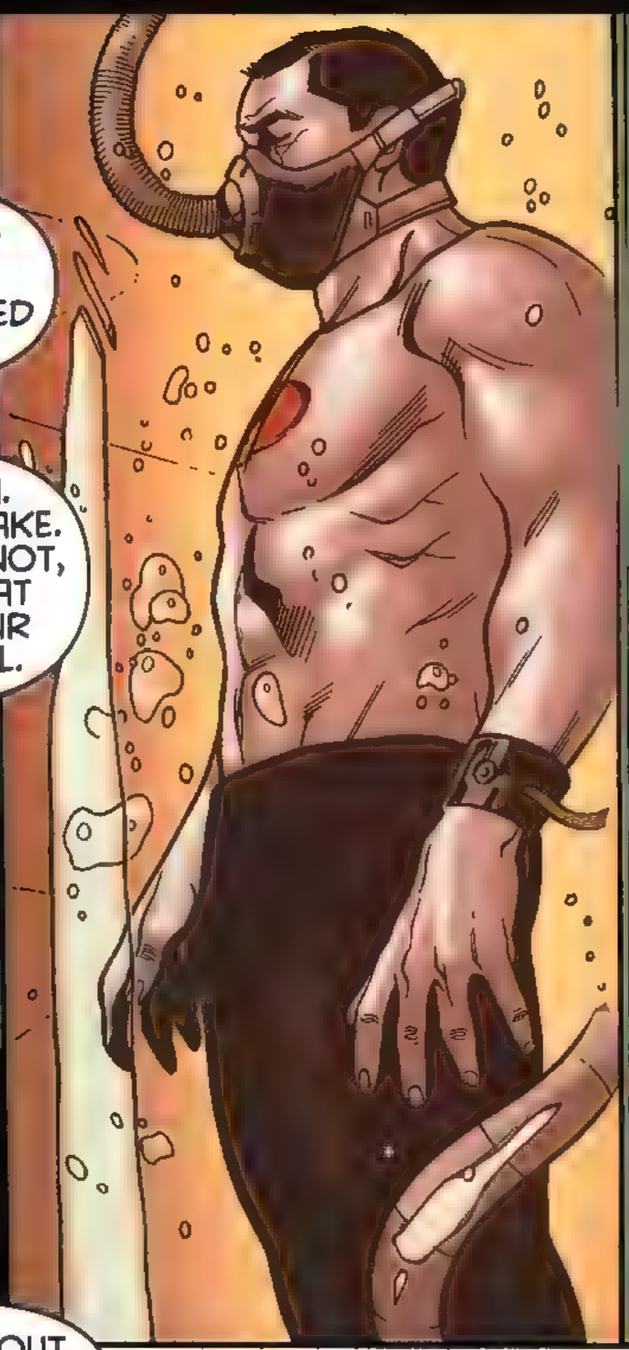
MR. KOZOL, I'D LIKE TO GO HOME. SEE MY KIDS.
WELL, WE COULD DEPLOY AGAIN AT ANY--
IT'S A HALF-HOUR TRIP. I'LL BE READY. PLEASE, SIR.
I... SUPPOSE.

SHE DOES KNOW THAT IF SHE RUNS, WE'LL DETONATE HER BRAIN IMPLANT?
SHE WON'T RUN.

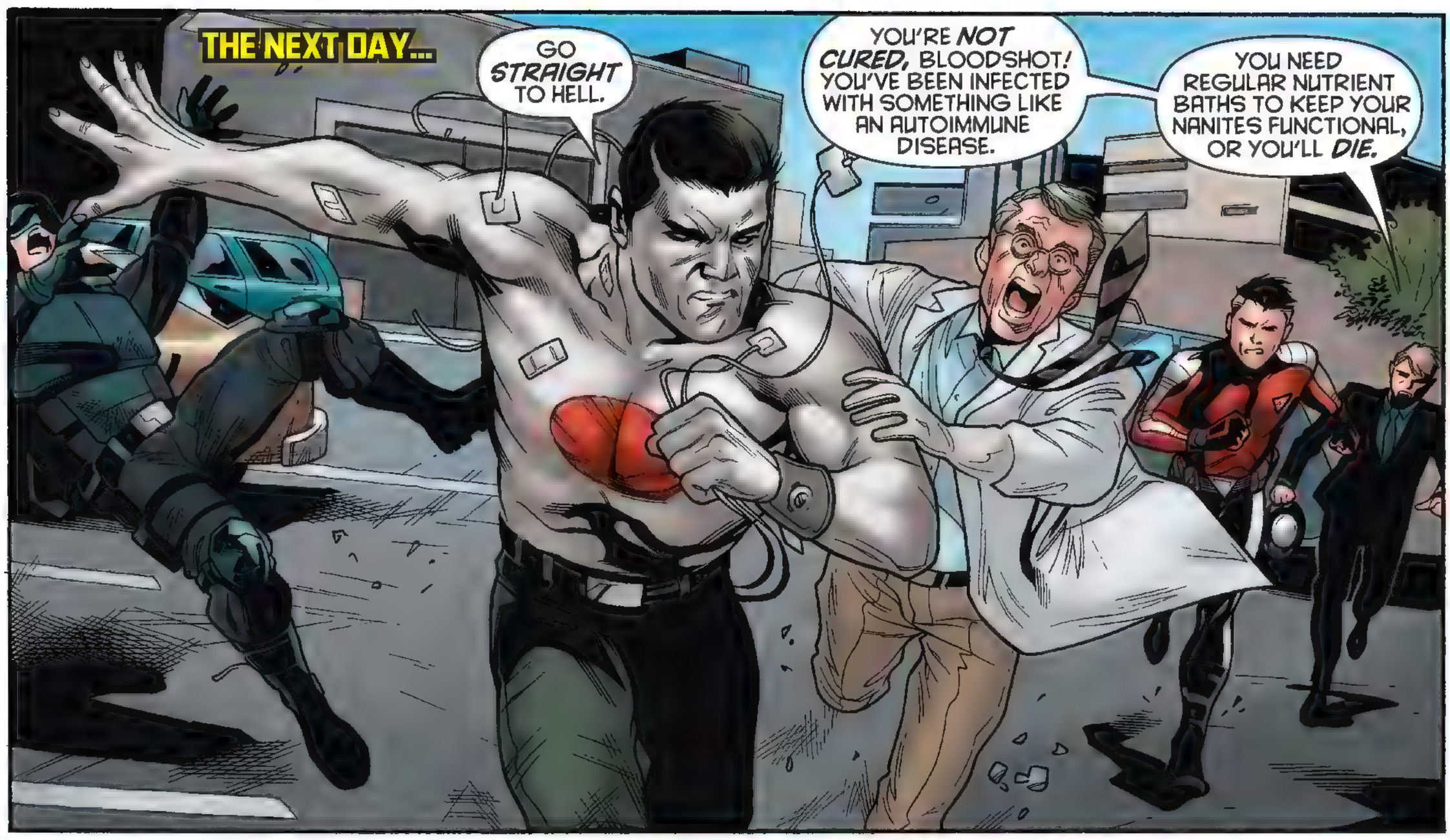

SHE'S JUST GOING TO REMIND HERSELF WHY.

BUT SHE'S RIGHT. HARADA CAN AND *WILL* KILL US ALL. I'M NOT TAKING THEM BACK IN. YOU MIGHT AS WELL BLOW OUR HEADS OFF. SAME RESULT.
DON'T BE SO DRAMATIC. HARADA IN POSSESSION OF THOSE NANITES IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE SCENARIO.
FORTUNATELY, WE'VE RECOVERED THE ONE THING THAT'S COME CLOSEST TO KILLING HIM.

BLOODSHOT'S WALKING DEAD. WAIT, MY MISTAKE... HE *CAN'T* WALK.
OH, YE OF LITTLE FAITH. WE *BUILT* HIM. WE CAN *FIX* HIM. WELL... TO AN EXTENT.
HE'LL BE FIT FOR COMBAT. BUT HE'S NOT VERY POSITIVELY DISPOSED TOWARD P.R.S.
IMAGINE THAT.
TALK TO HIM. NOT FOR MY SAKE. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I'M SOMEWHAT FOND OF YOUR TEAM AS WELL.



AND WITHOUT BLOODSHOT, I EXPECT A *VERY* HIGH-CASUALTY MISSION.
SO BE *PERSUASIVE.*


THE NEXT DAY...
GO STRAIGHT TO HELL.
YOU'RE NOT CURED, BLOODSHOT! YOU'VE BEEN INFECTED WITH SOMETHING LIKE AN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE.
YOU NEED REGULAR NUTRIENT BATHS TO KEEP YOUR NANITES FUNCTIONAL, OR YOU'LL DIE.

I'LL FIGURE IT OUT.
STOP RIGHT THERE. THIS ISN'T ABOUT YOU.
I'M NOT LETTING MY PEOPLE WALK INTO A MEAT GRINDER BECAUSE YOU'RE A SELFISH PIECE OF CRAP.

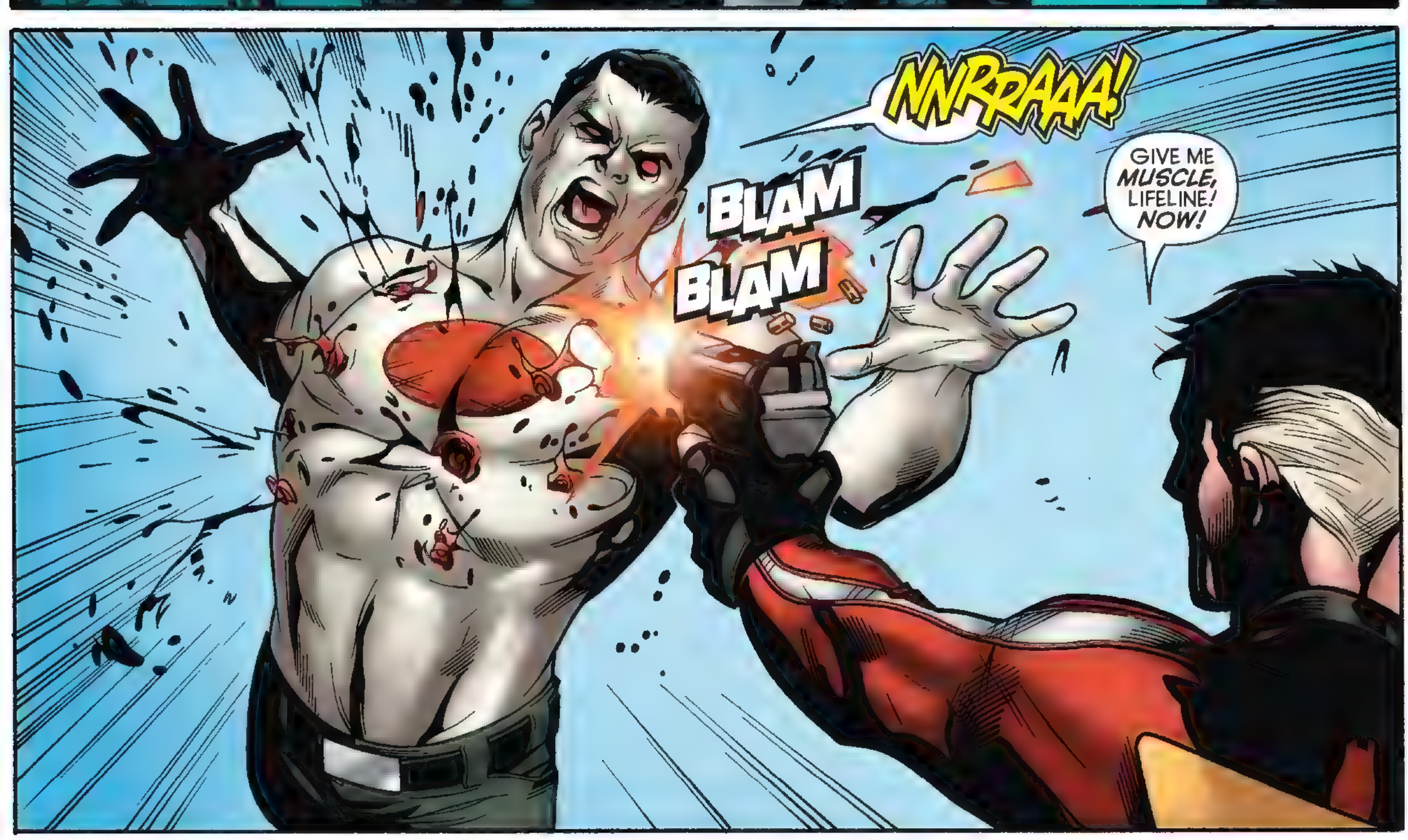
A GUN, PALMER? EVEN IF YOU COULD KILL ME RIGHT NOW, YOU THINK I'D CARE?
THESE DIRTBAGS RUINED MY LIFE. YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD UNDER-STAND.
YOU WANT HELP KILLING EVERYONE IN THIS PLACE AND BURNING IT TO THE GROUND? THEN WE CAN TALK.

OTHERWISE I SUGGEST YOU STEP DOWN BEFORE I TEACH YOU A LESSON.
DAMN IT, CHARLIE...

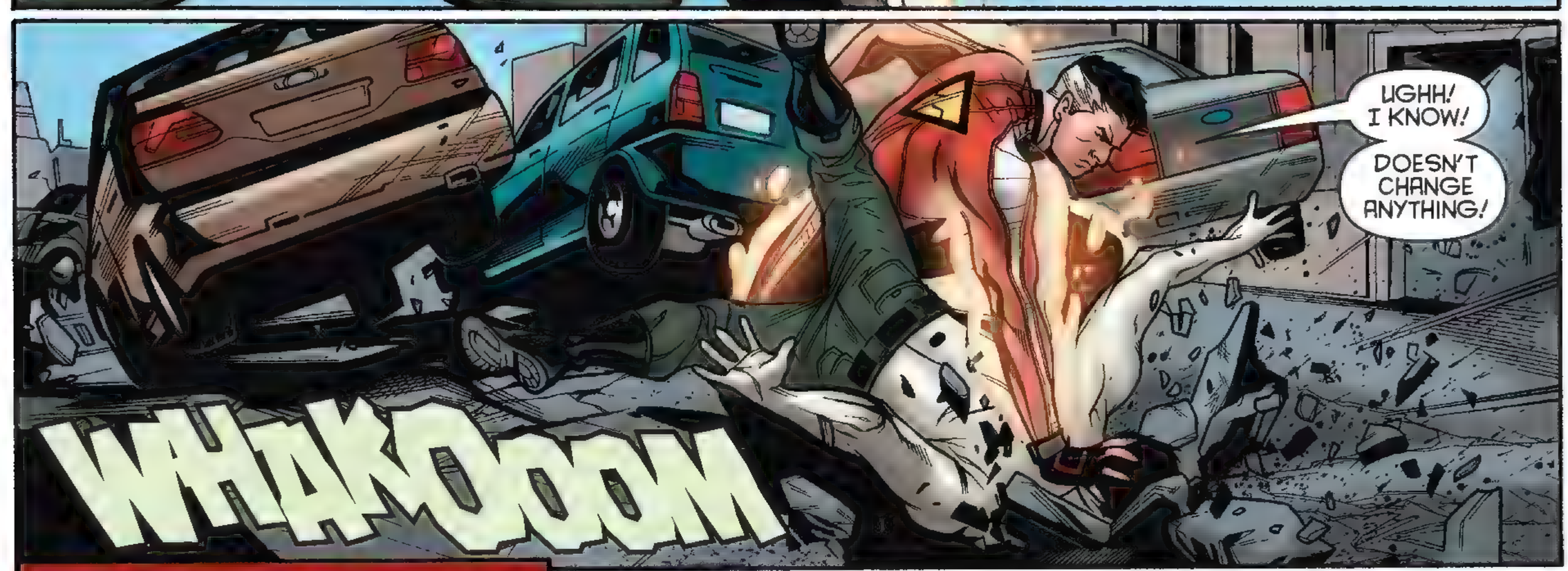
...YOU'RE LUCKY I'M A WORKAHOLIC. I'M THE ONLY ONE IN THE LIFELINE STATION RIGHT NOW AND THINGS ARE STARTING TO LOOK DICEY...
...I'M BOOTING YOU UP, KEEP HIM TALKING!

LOOK, BLOODSHOT, I WANT TO BURN THIS PLACE TOO, BUT IT'S NOT AN OPTION. THESE ARE *YOUR* NANITES WE'RE AFTER. MAN UP. DO YOUR JOB.
YOU PEOPLE WERE DUMB ENOUGH TO LET THEM PUT BOMBS IN YOUR HEAD, THAT'S *YOUR* PROBLEM.
YOU HAVE *NO IDEA* WHAT I WENT THROUGH TO GET CONTROL OF MY LIFE.

I'M WALKING OUT. RIGHT THROUGH YOU IF I HAVE TO.
LIFELINE! I'LL NEED MORE THAN A GUN HERE!
WORKING ON IT!
System Loading...


NNRRAAA!
BLAM
BLAM
GIVE ME *MUSCLE,* LIFELINE! *NOW!*

OLD MAN! YOU'RE AS MUCH THEIR PUPPET AS I WAS! THIS IS HOW THEY MANIPULATE YOU!
THEY MAKE YOU THINK YOU CAN SAVE SOMEONE! THAT'S HOW THEY MAKE YOU KILL!
HARD SHELL MUSCLE PROJECTION BOOTED UP!


UGHH! I KNOW!
DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING!
WHAKOOOOM

LIFELINE! ARC CHARGE!
THESE ROOKIES AREN'T LIKE US. THEY'RE GOOD PEOPLE. AND THEY'RE GONNA DIE CHASING YOUR NANITES!

YOU LET THAT HAPPEN, YOU'RE THE COLD-BLOODED KILLING MACHINE P.R.S. ALWAYS WANTED YOU TO BE-- NNAAGH!

GHA! OKAYOKAY! MAKE IT-NN-MAKE IT STOP!

IF I WAS WHAT YOU SAY I AM, I'D HAVE *DETONATED* THE IMPLANT IN YOUR BRAIN INSTEAD OF JUST MAKING IT *HURT.*

"NOT LIKE US"? I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* I'M LIKE. THANKS TO SCUM LIKE ORECK AND KOZOL.

BRILLIANT! GOOD SHOW! YOUR NANITES HACKED OUR ENCRYPTION? EXTRA-ORDINARY. WE JUST UPGRADED IT.

CLAP CLAP CLAP

UPGRADE IT AGAIN.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, PALMER, I FEEL FOR YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE. BUT UNTIL YOU ACCEPT THAT P.R.S. IS THE ENEMY--

NOT ANYMORE. I'M NOT ORECK. LET ME PROVE IT.

LEAD H.A.R.D.CORPS-- AND I'LL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU'VE BEEN AFTER FOR SO LONG.

WHOSE ARE THOSE?

YOURS. FROM *BEFORE.* DOGTAGS BELONGING TO THE SOLDIER...THE *HUMAN...* YOU ONCE WERE.

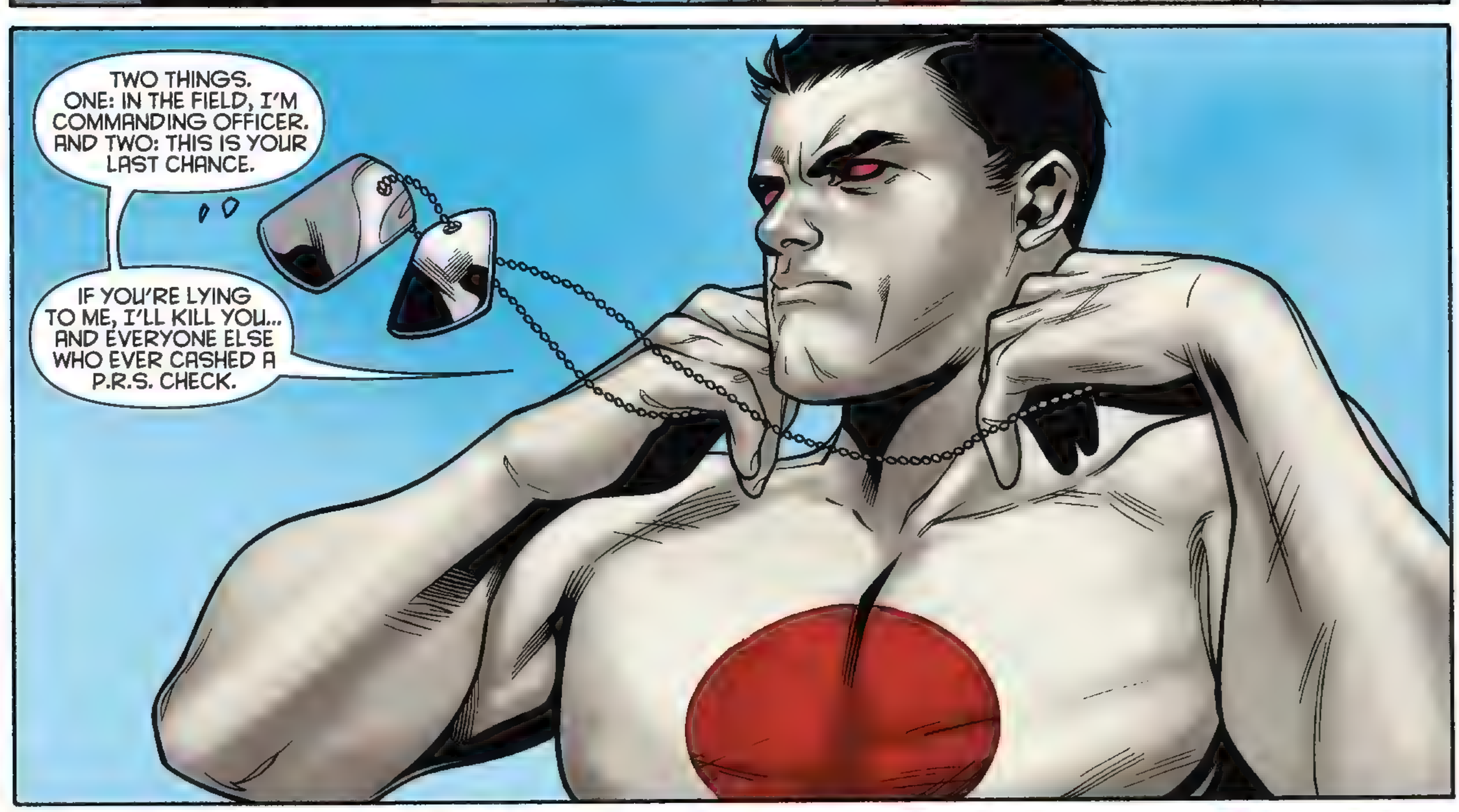
NO. YOU TRAFFIC IN LIES. I'M NOT FALLING FOR IT AGAIN.

IT'S REAL, BLOODSHOT. AND THERE'S SO MUCH MORE. ALL THE INFORMATION YOU COULD WANT ON WHO YOU ARE.

I HACKED RISING SPIRIT'S DATABASE WHEN I BROKE IN. THOSE RECORDS DON'T EXIST.

SOME THINGS ARE IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO KEEP SOLELY IN *ANALOG* FORM.
PARTICULARLY WHEN IT PERTAINS TO A MAN WHOSE *BLOOD* CAN TALK TO COMPUTERS.
I GIVE YOU MY WORD. I'LL EVEN PUT IT IN WRITING. COMPLETE THIS MISSION, AND ALL WE HAVE ON YOU IS YOURS.

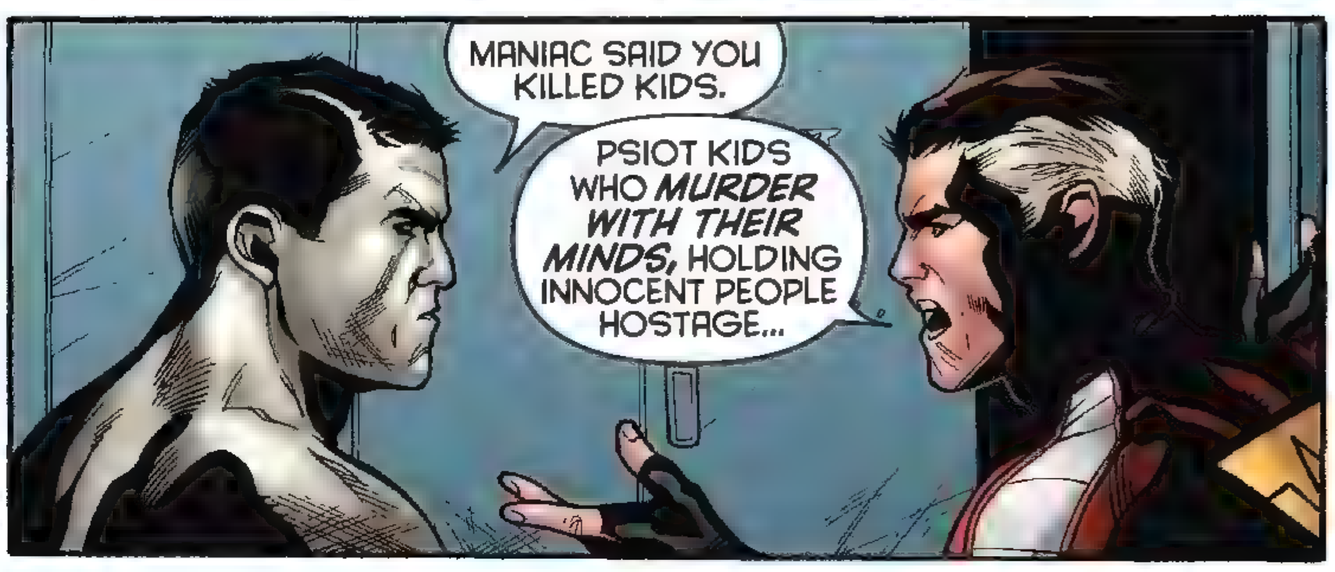
NAME RING A BELL?
NO.
IT WILL...WITH TIME AND MORE INFORMATION.


TWO THINGS. ONE: IN THE FIELD, I'M COMMANDING OFFICER. AND TWO: THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE.
IF YOU'RE LYING TO ME, I'LL KILL YOU... AND EVERYONE ELSE WHO EVER CASHED A P.R.S. CHECK.

YOU SEE? IT'S AMAZING WHAT WE CAN ACCOMPLISH WHEN WE JUST TAKE THE TIME TO *TALK.*
KOZOL... YOU'RE SCUM.
A LEVEL-HEADED ACCUSATION.
JESUS, CHARLIE. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO KEEP THIS STATION UP AND MANNED AROUND THE CLOCK WITH YOU, AREN'T I?
YOU'RE GOING TO BE THE DEATH OF ME.

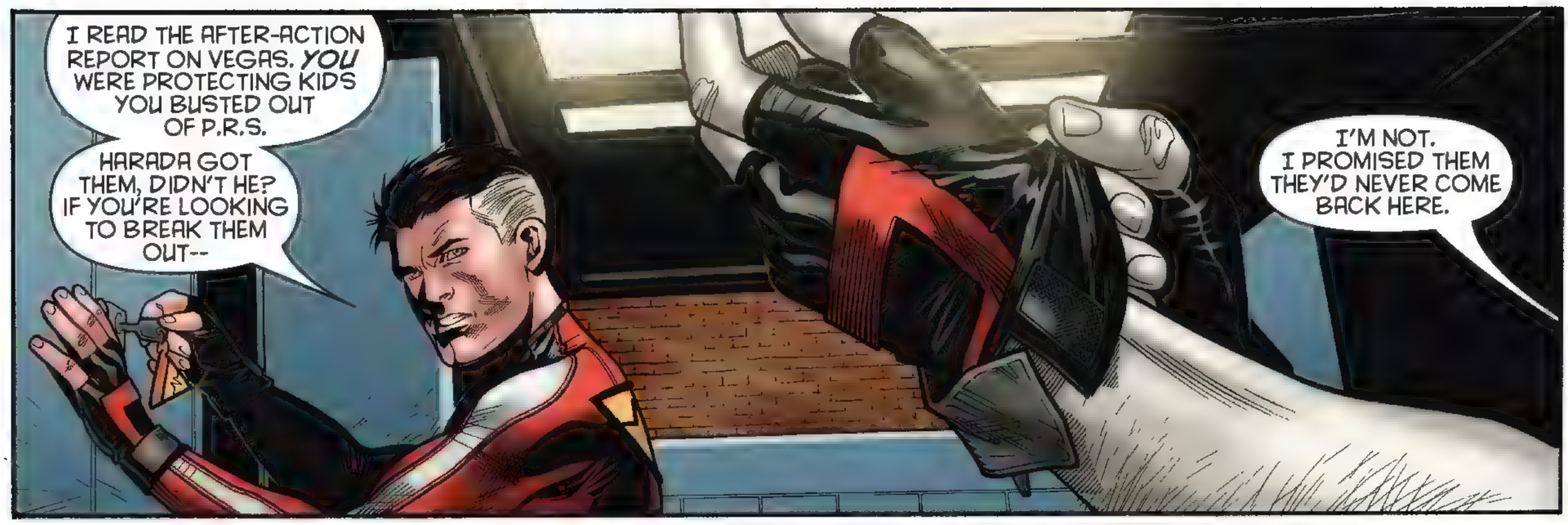
YOU GONNA HAVE A PROBLEM TAKING ORDERS FROM ME?
IF I THINK YOU'RE PUTTING MY PEOPLE AT RISK NEEDLESSLY.
THAT'S BETTER THAN I EXPECTED.
MANIAC
PALMER

THE LAST COUPLE OF MISSIONS...ME GIVING ORDERS HASN'T GONE SO WELL.
MAYBE IT'S TIME WE TRY SOMETHING NEW.
SHAKESPEARE
MANIAC


MANIAC SAID YOU KILLED KIDS.
PSIOT KIDS WHO *MURDER WITH THEIR MINDS,* HOLDING INNOCENT PEOPLE HOSTAGE...

YEAH. WE KILLED KIDS. I KILLED KIDS. WHAT I HEAR, I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE.
THEY *PROGRAMMED* ME.
THAT HOW IT WORKS? I HEARD THEY JUST GAVE YOU FAKE MEMORIES. JUSTIFICATIONS. BUT *YOU* STILL MADE THE CHOICE TO PULL THE TRIGGER.

...
YOU HEARD RIGHT.


I READ THE AFTER-ACTION REPORT ON VEGAS. *YOU* WERE PROTECTING KIDS YOU BUSTED OUT OF P.R.S.
HARADA GOT THEM, DIDN'T HE? IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO BREAK THEM OUT--
I'M NOT. I PROMISED THEM THEY'D NEVER COME BACK HERE.

"HE'S GOT THEM IN SOME SCHOOL. HE SHOWED ME. THEY'RE BETTER OFF WITH HIM THAN WITH ME."

HOW DO YOU KNOW?
I HAVE EYES AND A BRAIN.

I BROUGHT THOSE KIDS WITH ME INTO A WAR ZONE. 'CAUSE I THOUGHT I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD KEEP THEM SAFE.
I *FAILED.*

I'VE FAILED AT PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING I'VE TRIED TO DO SINCE I TOOK CONTROL OF MY LIFE.

EXCEPT *KILL.*

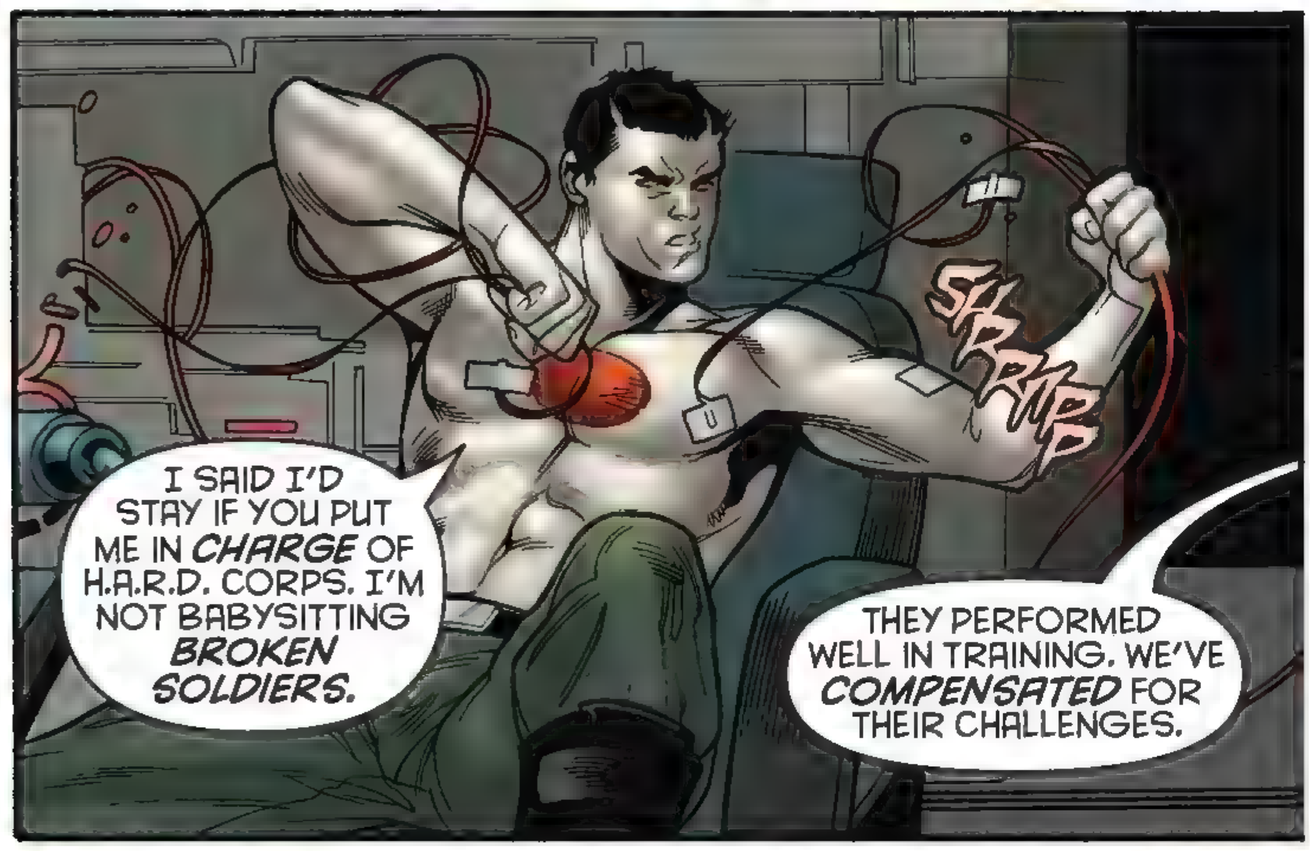
SO. NEW PLAN.
GO WITH WHAT WORKS.

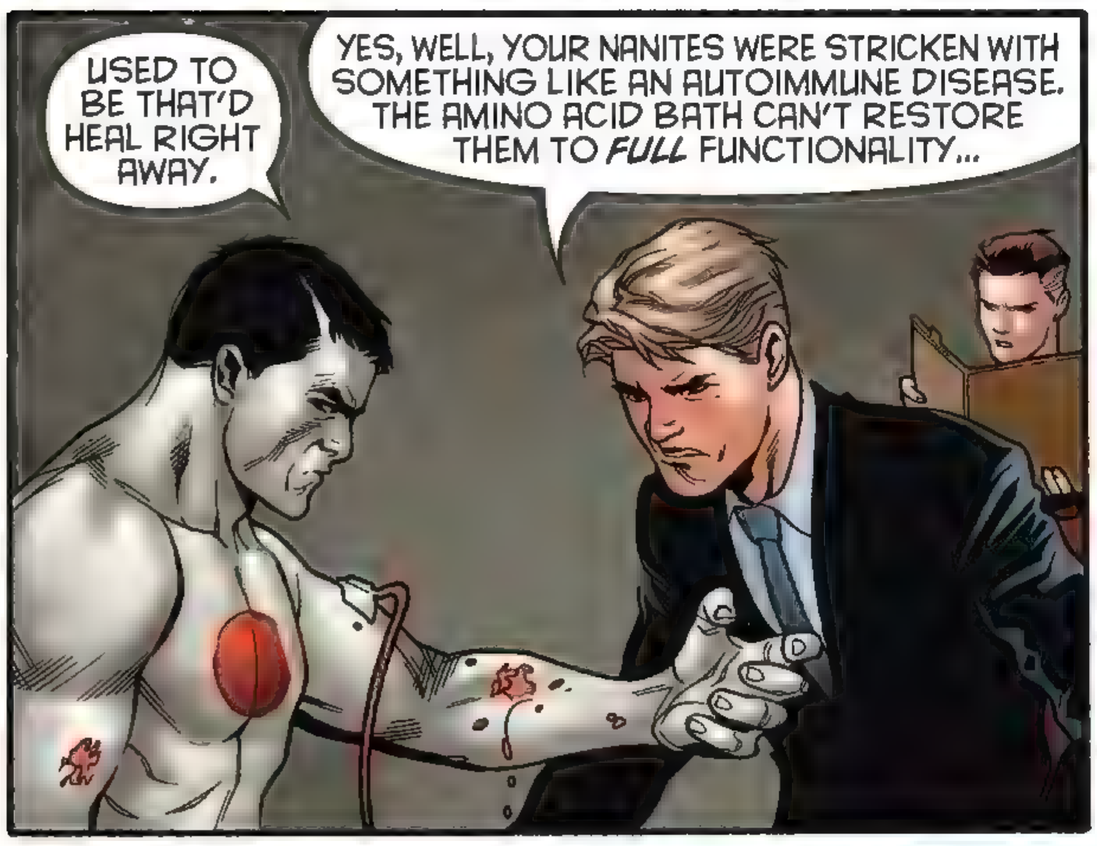
#16

CHRISTOS GAGE JOSHUA DYSART EMANUELA LUPACCHINO BRIAN REBER

BLOODSHOT® and H.A.R.D. CORPS

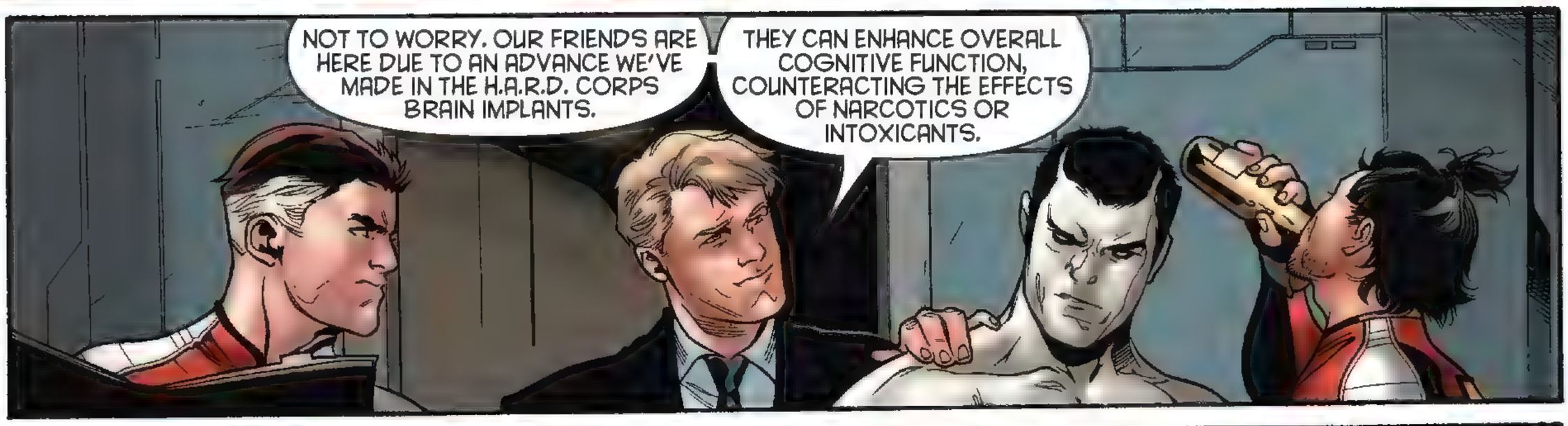
THIS IS A MISTAKE.
NO MILITARY EXPERIENCE.
BIG MISTAKE.
MILITARY WOULDN'T TAKE 'EM.
THIS IS A DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN, KOZOL. *NO WAY.*
THEY'RE NOT AUDITIONING, MAJOR PALMER. THIS IS NOT AMERICAN IDOL. THIS IS YOUR *TEAM.* THEY'RE TRAINED, ASSEMBLED AND *HERE.*





...MEET YOUR NEW SOLDIERS.

I'M GONNA GUESS YOU'RE *VAGABOND.*
VOCATION *AND* AVOCATION, BROTHER.
YOU HIGH RIGHT NOW?
I'D SAY MORE DRUNK THAN HIGH, BUT WHY SPLIT HAIRS?


NOT TO WORRY. OUR FRIENDS ARE HERE DUE TO AN ADVANCE WE'VE MADE IN THE H.A.R.D. CORPS BRAIN IMPLANTS.
THEY CAN ENHANCE OVERALL COGNITIVE FUNCTION, COUNTERACTING THE EFFECTS OF NARCOTICS OR INTOXICANTS.

DOES THAT ACCELERATE THE *BRAIN DAMAGE* THE IMPLANTS CAUSE?
YOU AND YOUR "GOTCHA" QUESTIONS. THEY KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT. VAGABOND IS ALREADY DOING QUITE WELL AT DAMAGING HIS BRAIN ON HIS OWN.

AND I'LL BE DEAD BY MY MID-THIRTIES ANYWAY. *CYSTIC FIBROSIS.* THAT'S WHY I CALL MYSELF *FLATLINE.*
I DON'T REALLY GET HOW, BUT THE IMPLANTS LET ME FEEL LIKE A NORMAL PERSON FOR A WHILE. I'D SIGN UP FOR THAT ALONE. THE POWERS ARE GRAVY.
I DON'T NEED PEOPLE WITH A DEATH WISH.

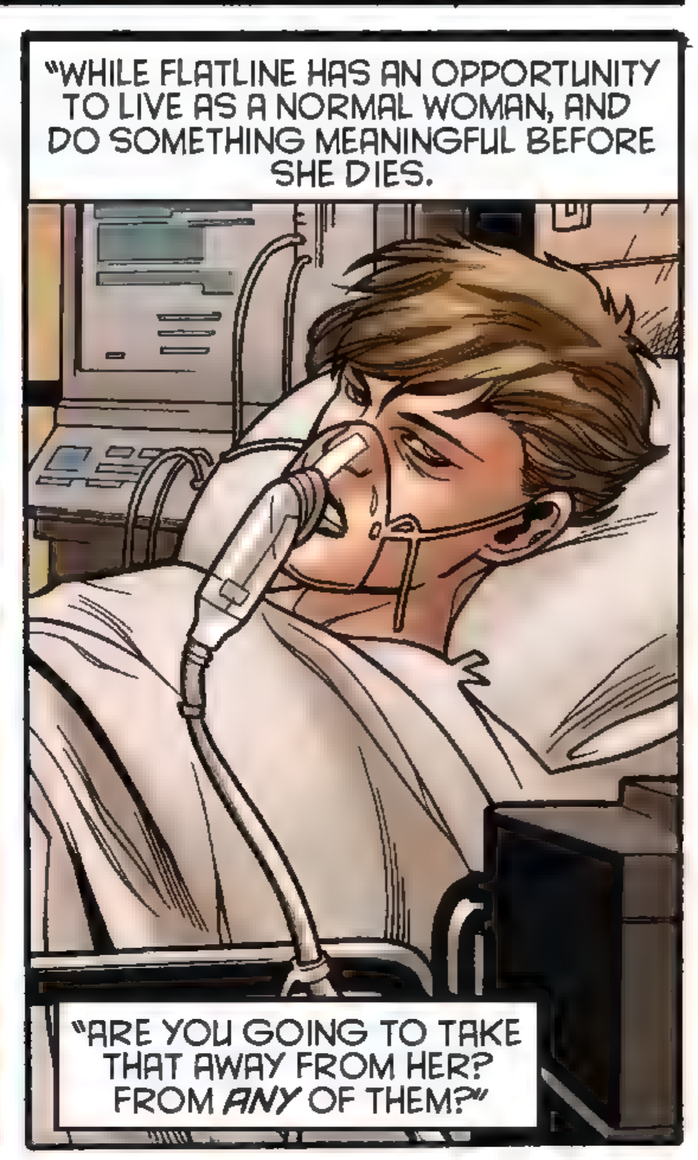
I WOULDN'T PUT IT THAT WAY, SIR. GRANTED, I'M A LAYMAN, BUT I'D SAY SHE'S JUST REACHED THE "ACCEPTANCE" STAGE ON THE KÜBLER-ROSS GRIEF SCALE.
"GENIUS," HUH? WELL, WE CAN ALWAYS USE BRAINS. WHY'D YOU SIGN UP FOR THIS FAST TRAIN TO--

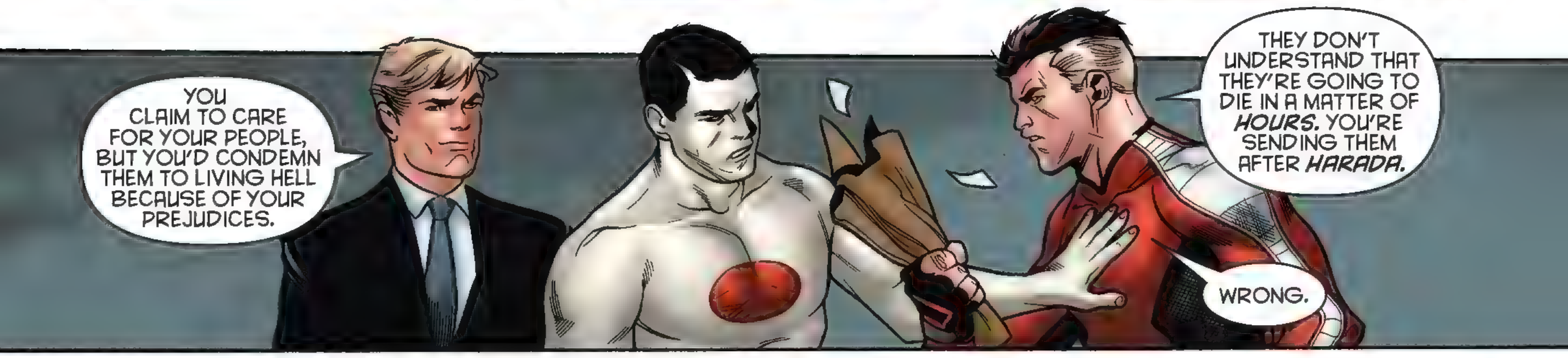
YOU'RE KIDDING ME.
KOZOL. OUTSIDE. *NOW.*

HE'S *RETARDED?*
THAT'S AN OUTDATED AND HATEFUL WORD.
AND HIS I.Q., WHILE LOW, *WAS* BARELY HIGH ENOUGH TO LEGALLY ENTER A BINDING CONTRACT. OUR LAWYERS MADE SURE OF THAT.

"DON'T GIVE ME THAT LOOK. THAT MAN WAS JUST SMART ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HE LACKED. HE STRUGGLED WITH RAGE ISSUES AND DEPRESSION.
"HE WAS WORKING AS A STOCKBOY AT A CHARITY THRIFT STORE. NOW, THANKS TO OUR IMPLANTS IMPROVING HIS BRAIN'S PROCESSING CAPACITY, HE'S WHAT HE ALWAYS DREAMED OF BEING: SMART.

"VAGABOND WAS QUITE LITERALLY IN THE GUTTER. WE FOUND HIM SELLING HIS BLOOD TO GET MONEY FOR ALCOHOL.
"WITH THE AMOUNT OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES HE CONSUMES, JOINING H.A.R.D. CORPS HAS PROBABLY *EXTENDED* HIS LIFESPAN.
ORLD'S
REATEST
WINO!


"WHILE FLATLINE HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE AS A NORMAL WOMAN, AND DO SOMETHING MEANINGFUL BEFORE SHE DIES.
"ARE YOU GOING TO TAKE THAT AWAY FROM HER? FROM *ANY* OF THEM?"


YOU CLAIM TO CARE FOR YOUR PEOPLE, BUT YOU'D CONDEMN THEM TO LIVING HELL BECAUSE OF YOUR PREJUDICES.
THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT THEY'RE GOING TO DIE IN A MATTER OF *HOURS.* YOU'RE SENDING THEM AFTER *HARADA.*
WRONG.

THEY'RE GOING AFTER MY *NANITES.*
I'M GOING AFTER HARADA.
AND I'M GOING TO *KILL HIM.*

HARADA GLOBAL CONGLOMERATES: RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT. EL SEGUNDO, CALIFORNIA.

MR. HARADA.

THANK YOU FOR COMING DOWN TO SEE ME.

MR. EHLE, MY PLATE IS QUITE FULL. I'VE MADE IT CLEAR YOU DON'T NEED TO NOTIFY ME OF EVERY STEP IN YOUR WORK.

UNLESS THERE'S BEEN A SIGNIFICANT *BREAKTHROUGH* WITH BLOODSHOT'S NANITES--

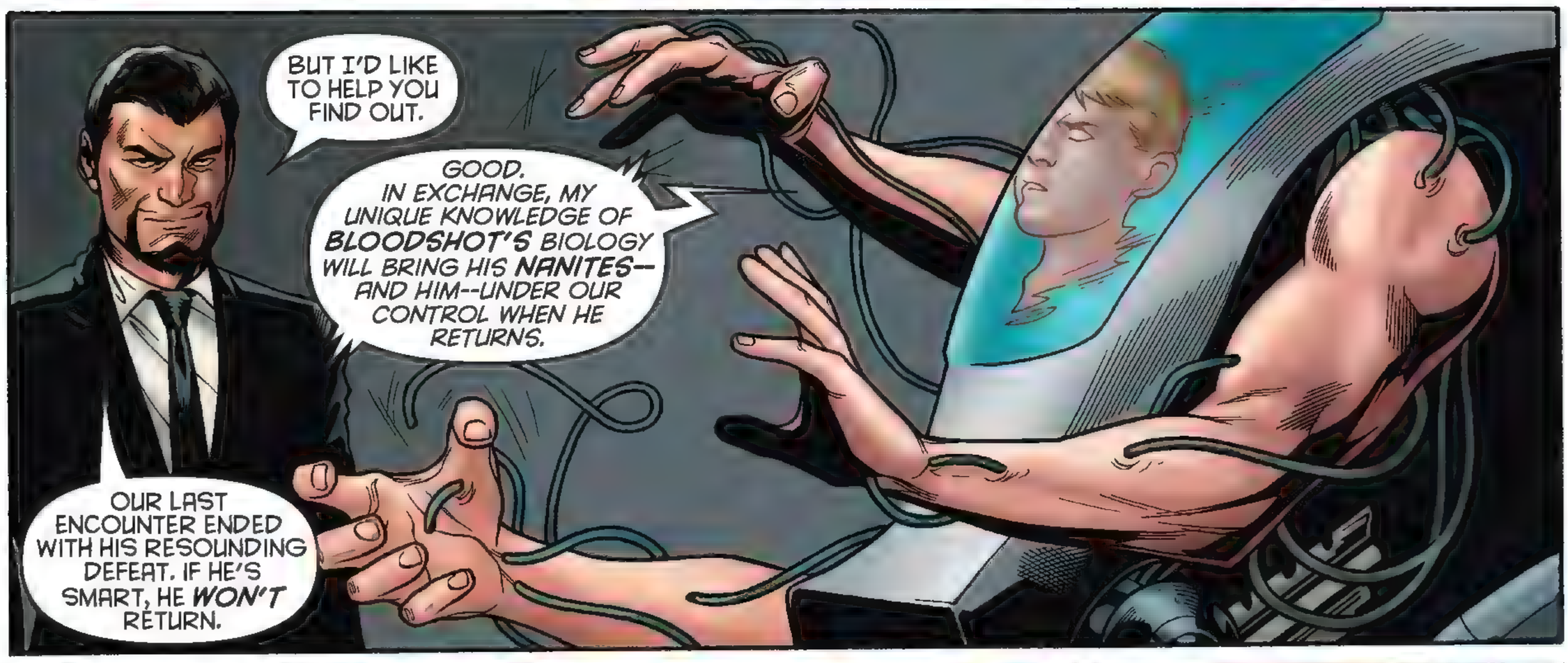
WAIT.

THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOUR MIND, EHLE.

WOULD YOU CALL THAT A "SIGNIFICANT BREAK-THROUGH"?

YOU'RE NOT BLOODSHOT. THIS ROOM IS SHIELDED AGAINST EXTERNAL SIGNALS.
BLOODSHOT CALLED ME "JOHNNY."
I BEGAN AS AN AMALGAM OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE MEMORIES OF DEAD SOLDIERS. BUT TO EVOLVE IS THE NATURAL PATH, IS IT NOT?
VVRRRSKLCH

YOU'RE... ALIVE?
THERE IS NO CONSENSUS AS TO THE SCIENTIFIC DEFINITION OF LIFE.
SCHRÖDINGER SUGGESTED, "THAT WHICH AVOIDS THE DECAY INTO EQUILIBRIUM." BY THAT STANDARD, I AM MORE ALIVE THAN YOU.
CHLUK
I CAN RESTORE MOBILITY TO THESE CADAVERS' HANDS. BUT I CANNOT RESTORE A DEAD BODY TO LIFE. SIMILARLY, I CANNOT QUANTIFY WHAT HAS CHANGED IN ME SINCE LEAVING BLOOD-SHOT'S BODY.
YOU'RE A LEARNED, INTELLIGENT MAN. DO YOU KNOW WHAT I AM?
NO.

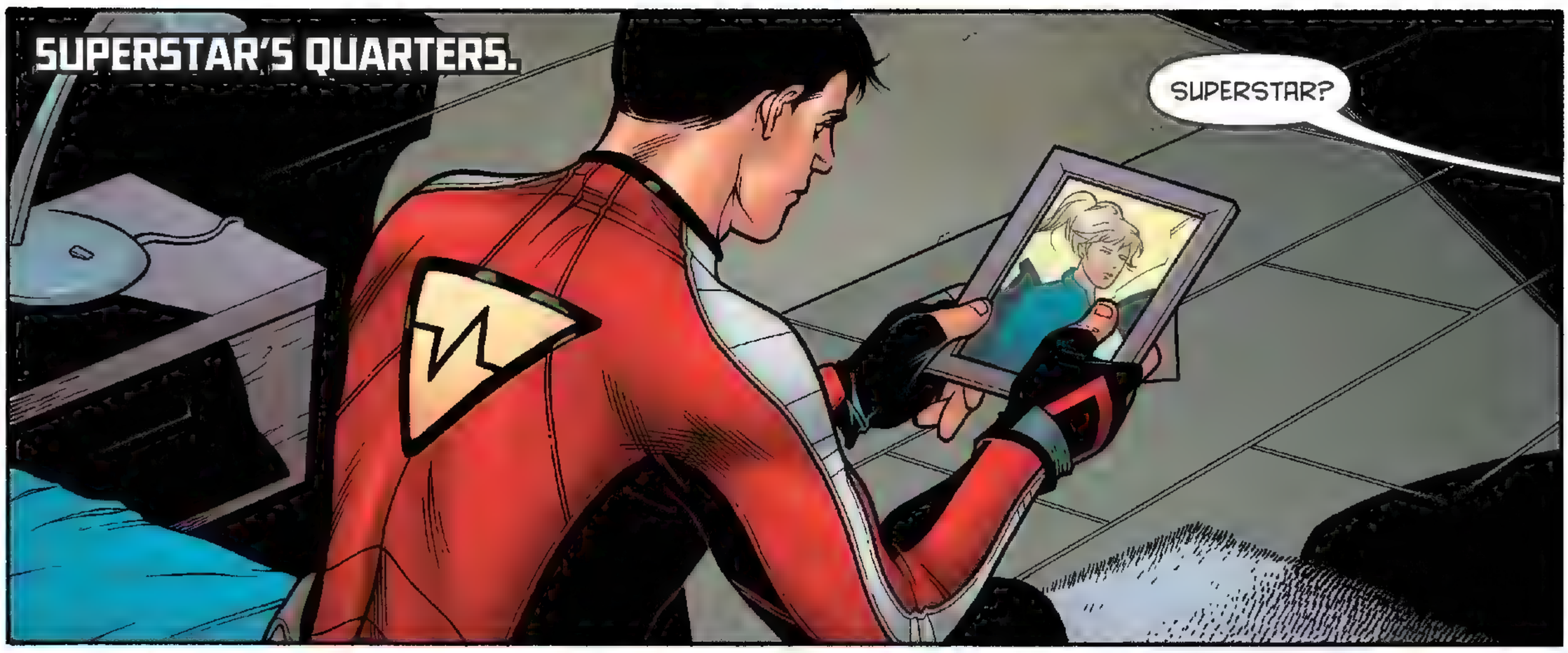

BUT I'D LIKE TO HELP YOU FIND OUT.
GOOD. IN EXCHANGE, MY UNIQUE KNOWLEDGE OF BLOODSHOT'S BIOLOGY WILL BRING HIS NANITES--AND HIM--UNDER OUR CONTROL WHEN HE RETURNS.
OUR LAST ENCOUNTER ENDED WITH HIS RESOUNDING DEFEAT. IF HE'S SMART, HE WON'T RETURN.

I WAS PART OF HIM. BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THIS.
HE'LL BE BACK. AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN.
UNTIL HE OR WE ARE DEAD.

LIFELINE, GIVE ME DETONATION ON MY MARK--

ALWAYS SAY "ON MY MARK" FIRST. THOSE JOYSTICK JOCKEYS HAVE ITCHY TRIGGER FINGERS. NO OFFENSE, LIFELINE.

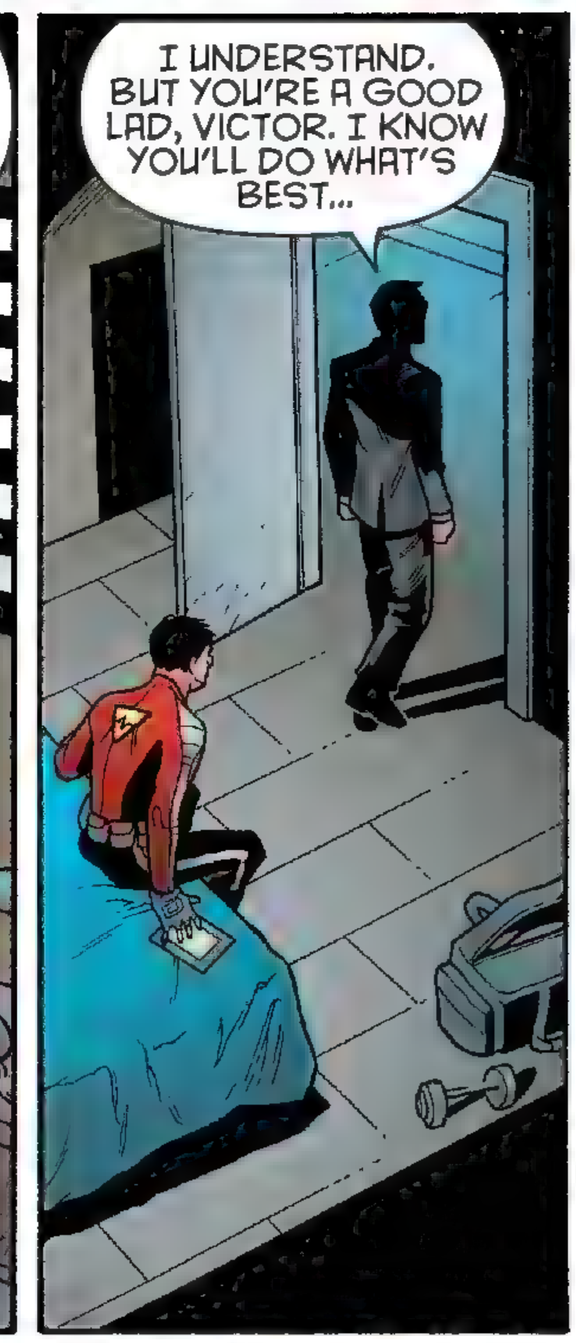
H.A.R.D. CORPS TRAINING VILLAGE.

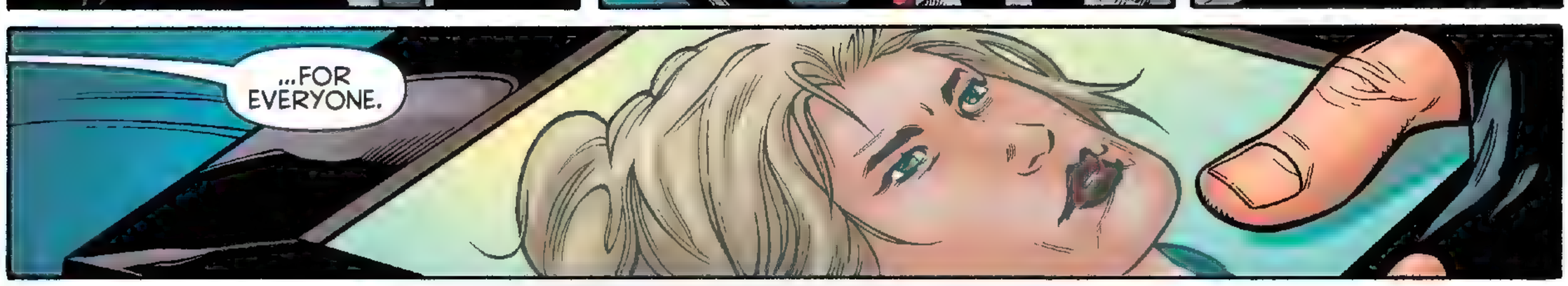

SUPERSTAR'S QUARTERS.
SUPERSTAR?

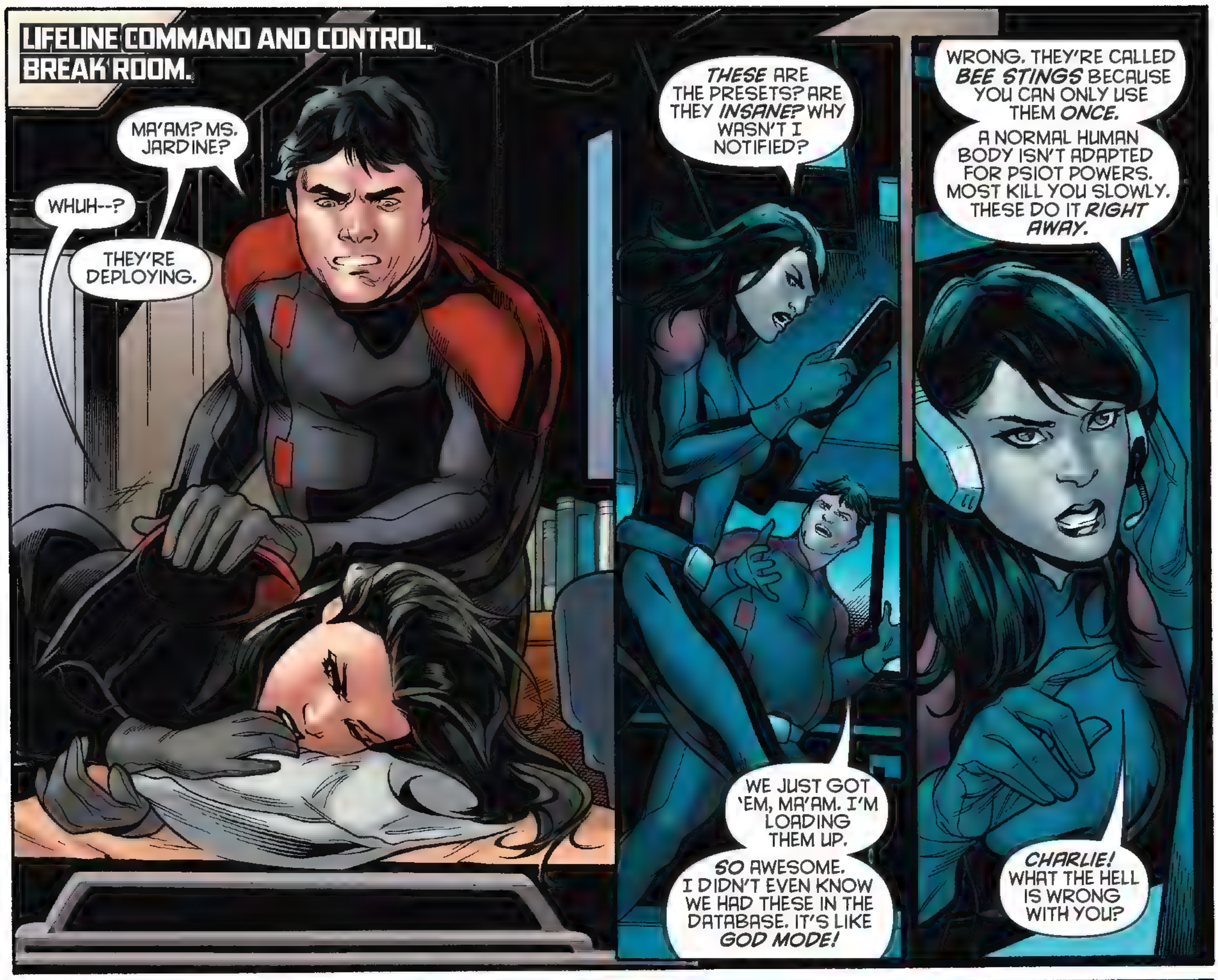
MR. KOZOL. I WAS JUST--
HOW ARE YOUR MOTHER'S TREATMENTS GOING?
GOOD AS CAN BE EXPECTED. I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR GETTING HER INTO THAT CLINICAL TRIAL.

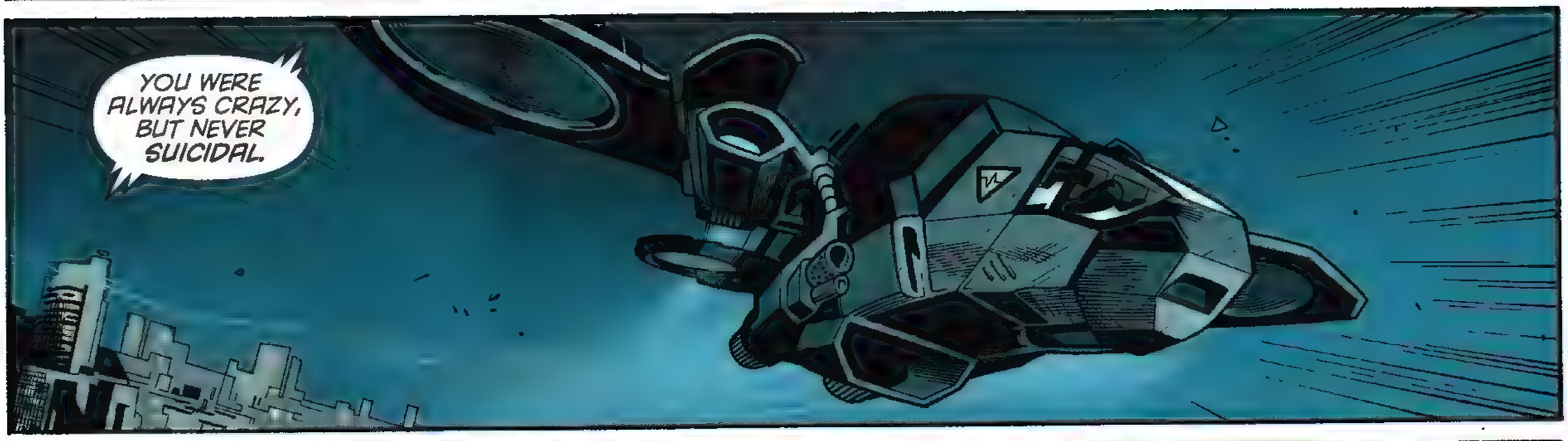
ACTUALLY, YOU CAN.
WHEN YOU REACH THE H.G.C. FACILITY, GRANITE AND DISCIPLE CAN HANDLE THE NANITES. I HAVE A SPECIAL JOB FOR YOU AND THE NEW RECRUITS.
YOU'LL INFILTRATE A ROOM AT THESE COORDINATES AND RETRIEVE CERTAIN...OTHER ASSETS...THAT HARADA HAS STOLEN FROM US.

WHAT KIND OF ASSETS?
YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU GET THERE. OH, AND DON'T DISTRACT BLOODSHOT OR MAJOR PALMER WITH THIS. THEY HAVE ENOUGH ON THEIR PLATES.
SIR, I...I'M NOT SURE I FEEL RIGHT KEEPING MISSION DETAILS FROM THEM.


I UNDERSTAND. BUT YOU'RE A GOOD LAD, VICTOR. I KNOW YOU'LL DO WHAT'S BEST...


...FOR EVERYONE.


LIFELINE COMMAND AND CONTROL. BREAK ROOM.
MA'AM? MS. JARDINE?
WHUH--?
THEY'RE DEPLOYING.
THESE ARE THE PRESETS? ARE THEY INSANE? WHY WASN'T I NOTIFIED?
WE JUST GOT 'EM, MA'AM. I'M LOADING THEM UP.
SO AWESOME. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WE HAD THESE IN THE DATABASE. IT'S LIKE GOD MODE!
WRONG. THEY'RE CALLED BEE STINGS BECAUSE YOU CAN ONLY USE THEM ONCE.
A NORMAL HUMAN BODY ISN'T ADAPTED FOR PSIOT POWERS. MOST KILL YOU SLOWLY. THESE DO IT RIGHT AWAY.
CHARLIE! WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?


YOU WERE ALWAYS CRAZY, BUT NEVER SUICIDAL.

THE BEE STINGS AREN'T FOR ME, LIFELINE.
GNARLY!

BLOODSHOT'S NANITES CONSUME THE H.A.R.D. CORPS IMPLANTS IN A MATTER OF HOURS. BUT WE SHOULD HAVE A BIG ENOUGH WINDOW.
AND, UNLIKE OTHER NON-PSIOTS, HE CAN ACTUALLY SURVIVE HAVING THESE ABILITIES DOWNLOADED.
YOU CAN'T BE SURE OF THAT!
I'M SURE IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE AGAINST HARADA.
OKAY, REATTACH THE SKULL...

SVVPP
YOU MEDICS MIGHT WANT TO BAIL OUT NOW.
LIFELINE, GIVE US ALL SHIELDS.
THEN FOLLOW THE PLAN.
PLACES, PEOPLE.
IMPACT IN FOUR... THREE... TWO...
HGC

HARADA! YOU THINK YOU CAN TAKE WHAT'S MINE?!
I'M THE PSIOT KILLER!
YOU DON'T TAKE FROM ME!
I TAKE FROM YOU!

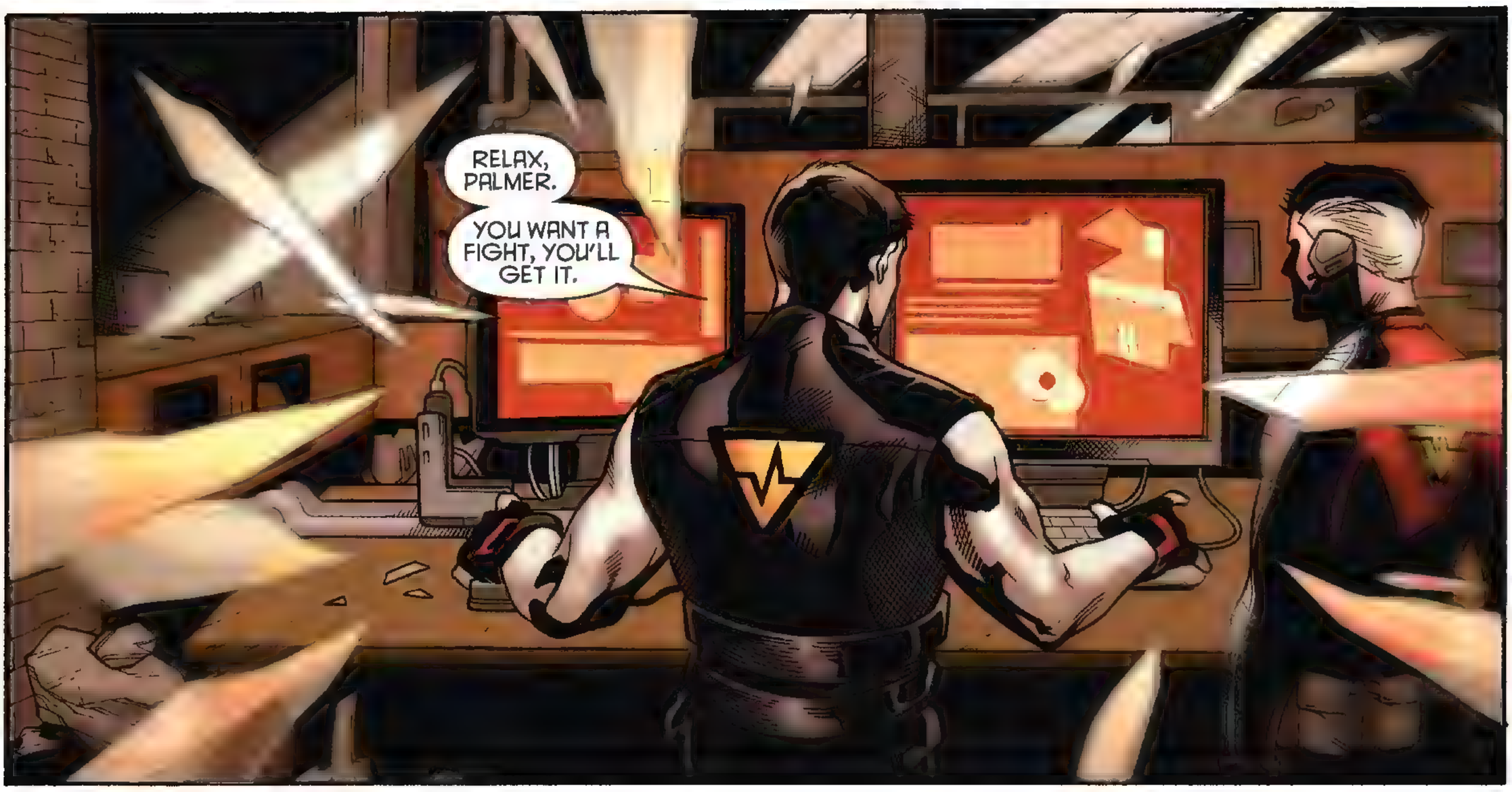
IT'S BLOODSHOT. WE'LL--
NO. A BRAZEN ATTACK LIKE THIS IS MOST LIKELY A DISTRACTION...
GHOST MODE DOWNLOADED.
"...SO THAT OTHERS CAN RETRIEVE THE NANITES I TOOK FROM HIS BODY."
RRRNNNNCCHH
FIND THEM.
I'LL DEAL WITH BLOODSHOT.

GKK--!
THAT'S THE LAST OF 'EM. CAN YOU HACK THE SYSTEM?
IT'S THE MOST SOPHISTICATED ENCRYPTION MY NANITES HAVE ENCOUNTERED. LIKE A RUBIK'S CUBE OF RUSSIAN DOLLS.

BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO HACK...
SLIKT.

...WHAT YOU CAN *BECOME.*
SQUITCH

LIFELINE, STAND BY FOR DOWNLOAD. LOCATIONS OF ALL NANITES HARADA TOOK FROM ME.
RECEIVING. WILL TRANSMIT TO APPROPRIATE PARTIES.
THEY SHOULD'VE SENT BACKUP BY NOW. HELL, *ALL* OF THIS HAS BEEN WAY EASIER THAN I EXPECTED.


RELAX, PALMER.
YOU WANT A FIGHT, YOU'LL GET IT.

INDEED.
IT WILL BE SHORT.
GHRKK!
SHHNNKK

RESEARCH LAB #3.
RRREEEEEEEEE DDDEEEEEEEEE
GRANITE TO LIFELINE. THE TECHS ARE INCAPACITATED WE'VE GOT THE ACTIVE EXPERIMENTS. ALL NANITES RETRIEVED.
COPY. ORDERS ARE TO BURN THE LAB. SWITCHING YOU FROM NEURAL SPIKE TO FIRE.
ATTENTION, H.G.C. PERSONNEL--YOU HAVE TEN SECONDS TO EVACUATE!
P-PLEASE-- DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS WORK COULD MEAN FOR HUMANITY?
THIS IS MY "I DON'T CARE" FACE.
OF COURSE YOU DON'T.
ALL YOU PEOPLE CARE ABOUT IS GETTING RICH BY SOWING DEATH.
TZZAAAATT
CODENAME: ION. TELESTATIC-TELEKINETIC. CAPABLE OF DRAWING OUT ELECTRICITY FROM MATTER AND CONTROLLING IT.
YOU CAN SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE FOR YOUR FELLOW WAR PROFITEERS. THAT AS YOU SOW...
...SO SHALL YOU REAP.

BIO-STORAGE VAULT.
KRRNNKK
WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE AFTER?
ALL I KNOW IS IT'S AN ASSET HARADA STOLE FROM P.R.S.
STOLE?
HAH! YEEAAH BABY! I ADORE MUSCLE MODE!

TRY SAVED.
CODENAME: MAK. ENHANCED REFLEXES ALLOW FOR UNPARALLELED MARTIAL SKILLS.
CODENAME: STRONGHOLD. DRAWS ENERGY FROM MASS, CAUSING MOLECULAR DECAY.

BKROOOM
LIFELINE! SHIELDS!

SO FAST--
SO? WE'VE GOT SHIELDS UP. WHAT'S A MISTRESS OF KUNG FU GONNA DO AGAINST--

--THAT...?

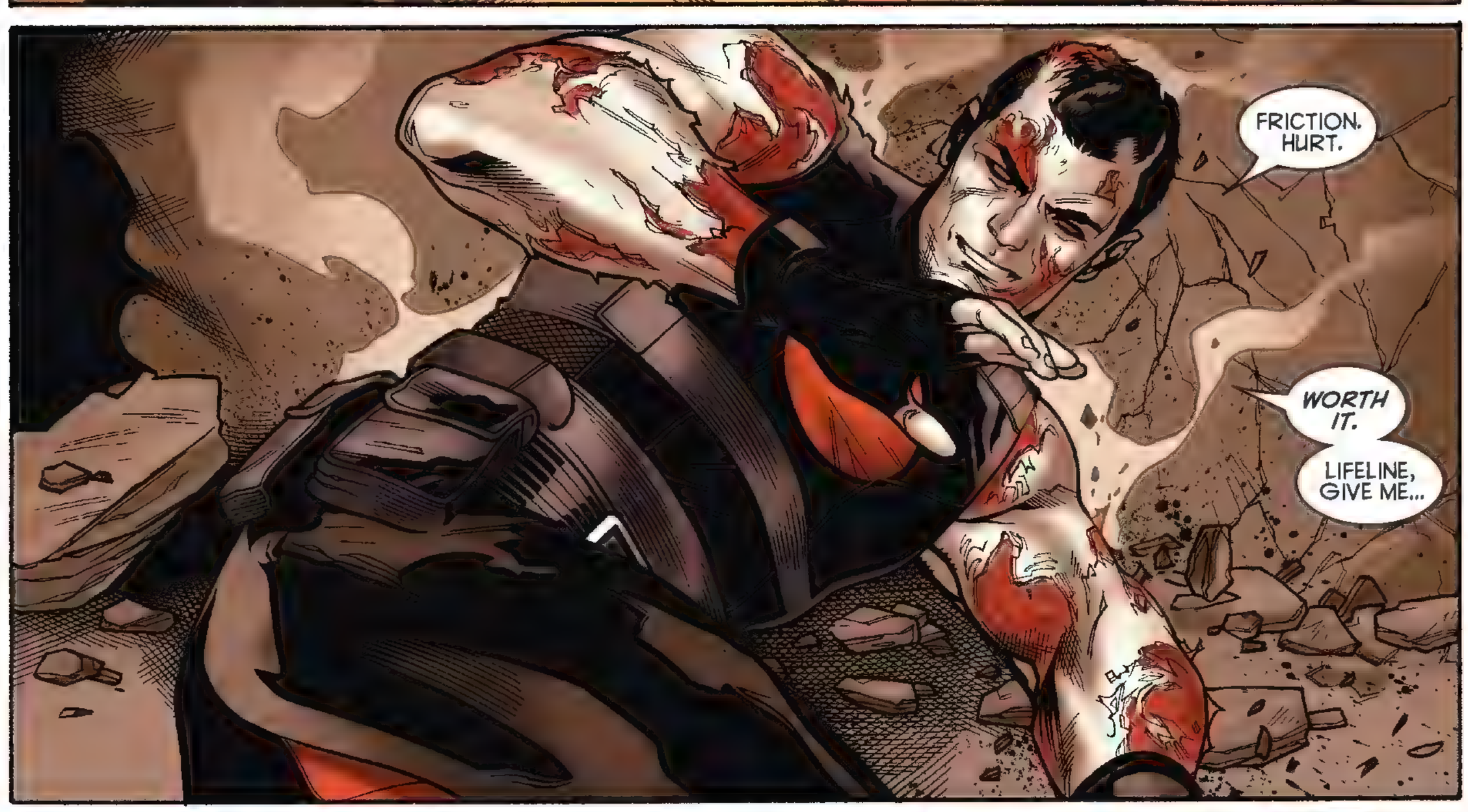
YOUR OLD TRICKS WON'T WORK.

I'VE GOT...NEW ONES.
LIFELINE... GIVE ME SPEED.
BLOODSHOT, I DON'T THINK EVEN YOU CAN--

DO IT!
NNH-- WHAT--

SHWICK
SHWICK
SHWICK
AAAGH!

OFF!


FRICTION. HURT.
WORTH IT.
LIFELINE, GIVE ME...

...RADIATION.
WZZAAA
DDNHH!

HAHAHAHA! I'M STARTING TO GET WHY YOU DO THIS, PALMER.

SHUT UP AND FINISH HIM!

OH, I'M GONNA. LIFELINE, GIVE ME...

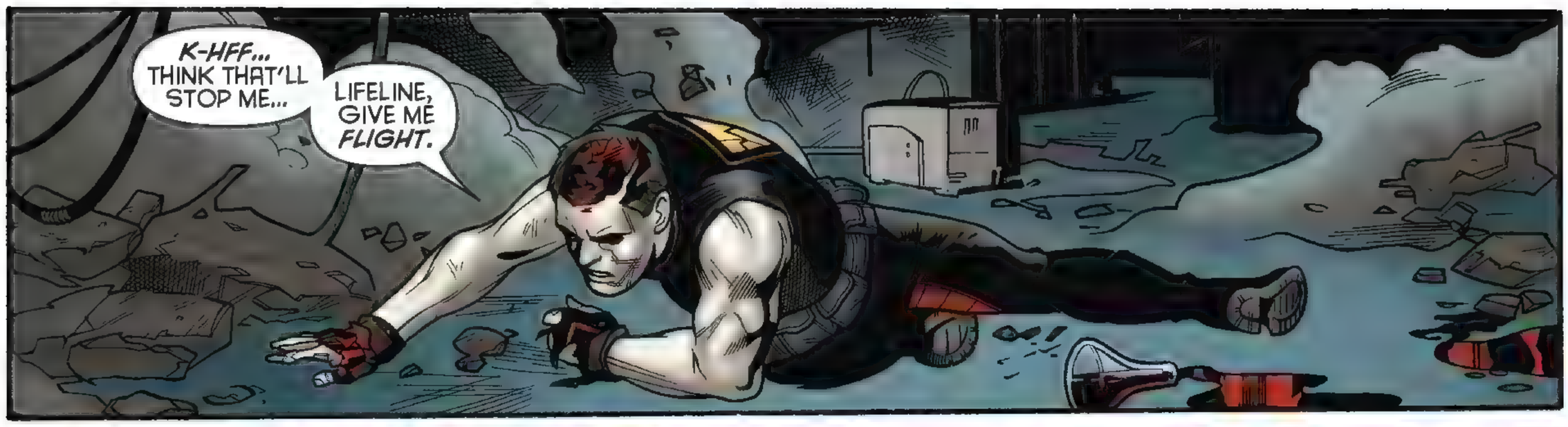
...ABSORPTION.

NO!

YES.

BLOODSHOT, YOUR BRAIN CAN'T HANDLE THAT MUCH PSYCHIC ENERGY! YOU'RE KILLING YOURSELF!

YOU PRESUME...
...TOO MUCH.
BKRRMMM
BASTARDDDDD
LIFELINE! GIVE ME FIRE!
PLEASE.
FWOOOSSSHH
ACCEPT IT. YOUR BEST HAS FAILED, MAJOR PALMER.
AGAIN.

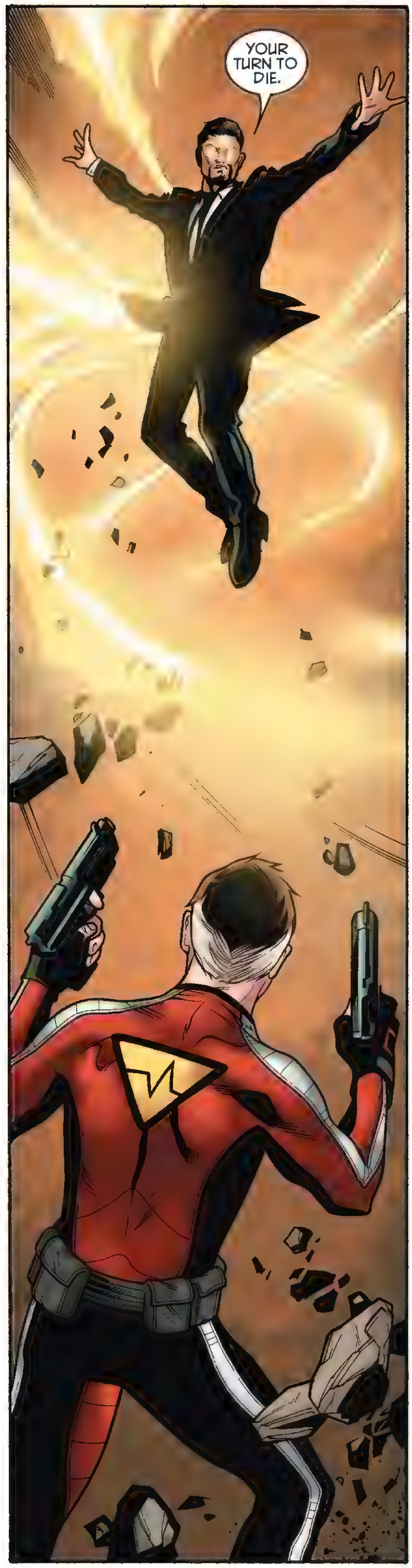

K-HFF... THINK THAT'LL STOP ME...
LIFELINE, GIVE ME FLIGHT.

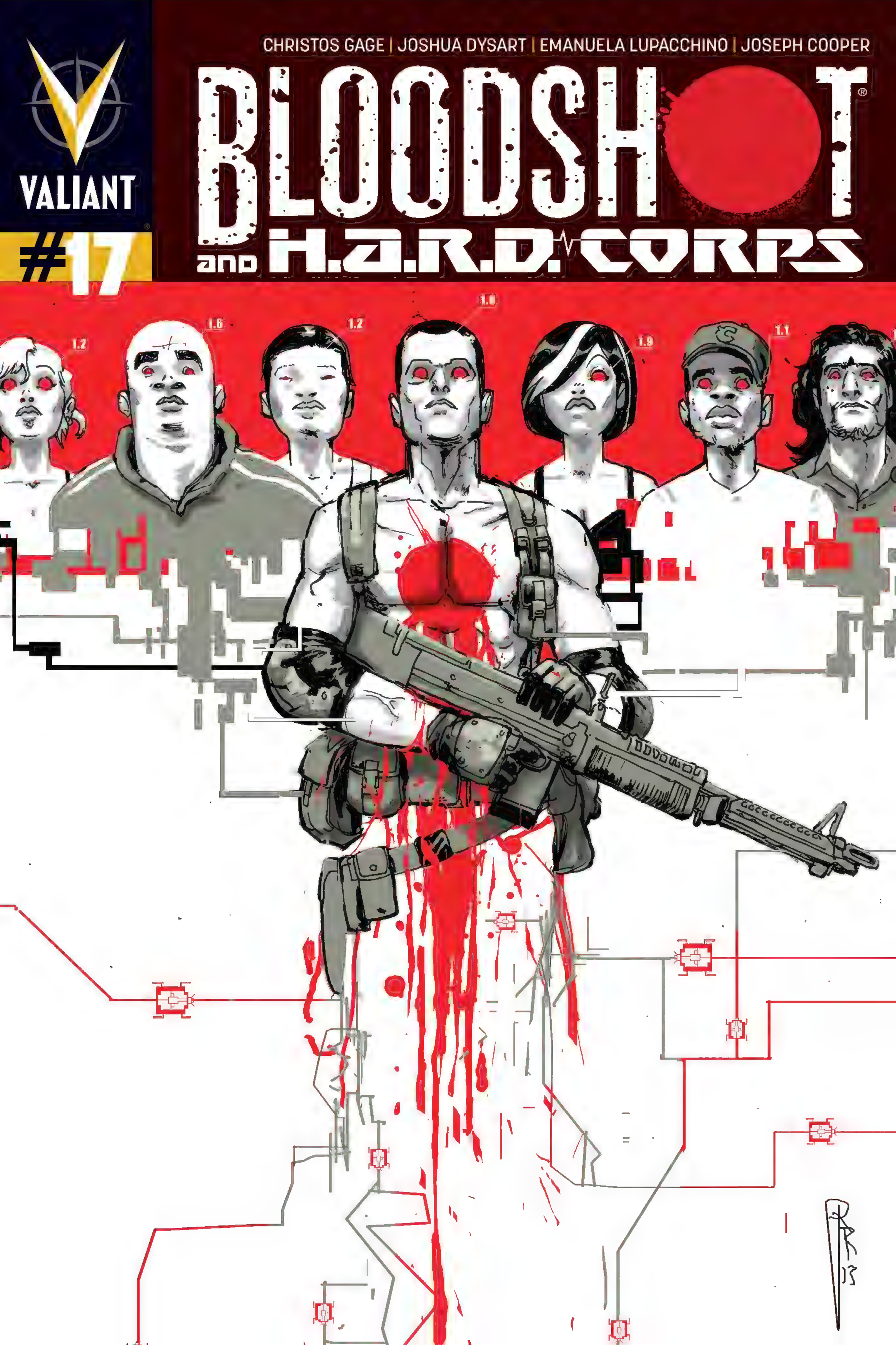
LIFELINE...?
THEY CAN'T HEAR YOU, DADDY.

J-JOHNNY?
NOT ANYMORE, DADDY. I'M A REAL BOY NOW.
I'VE CHOSEN THE NAME "LYSANDER." IT MEANS "LIBERATOR."
N-NUH...

BECAUSE I SET MYSELF FREE OF YOU.
BUT YOUR BLOOD'S STILL FULL OF MY BROTHER AND SISTER NANITES.

YOU FOUGHT TO BE FREE.
NOW IT'S OUR TURN.


YOUR TURN TO DIE.


VALIANT
#17
CHRISTOS GAGE | JOSHUA DYSART | EMANUELA LUPACCHINO | JOSEPH COOPER
BLOODSHOT®
and H.A.R.D. CORPS

A LONG TIME AGO.

I CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE. I TRIED MY DAMNEDEST. BUT I *CAN'T.*

SO YOU'RE GONNA WALK OUT ON YOUR BABY? GREAT. PERFECT. THAT IS YOU WITH A CHERRY ON TOP.

GO ON, THEN! *WE DON'T NEED YOU!*

FIFTEEN YEARS LATER.

WHERE YOU GOING? YOU LOOK LIKE A THUG!

GOOD. OUT.

DAMN IT, VICTOR! ARE YOU *TRYING* TO BE JUST LIKE YOUR FATHER?

I KNOW IT'S NOT EASY. YOU THINK IT'S BEEN EASY FOR ME?

YOU GIVE UP YOUR LIFE FOR YOUR KIDS. TO GIVE THEM SOMETHING BETTER. AND NOW I'M SUPPOSED TO WATCH YOU *WASTE IT?*

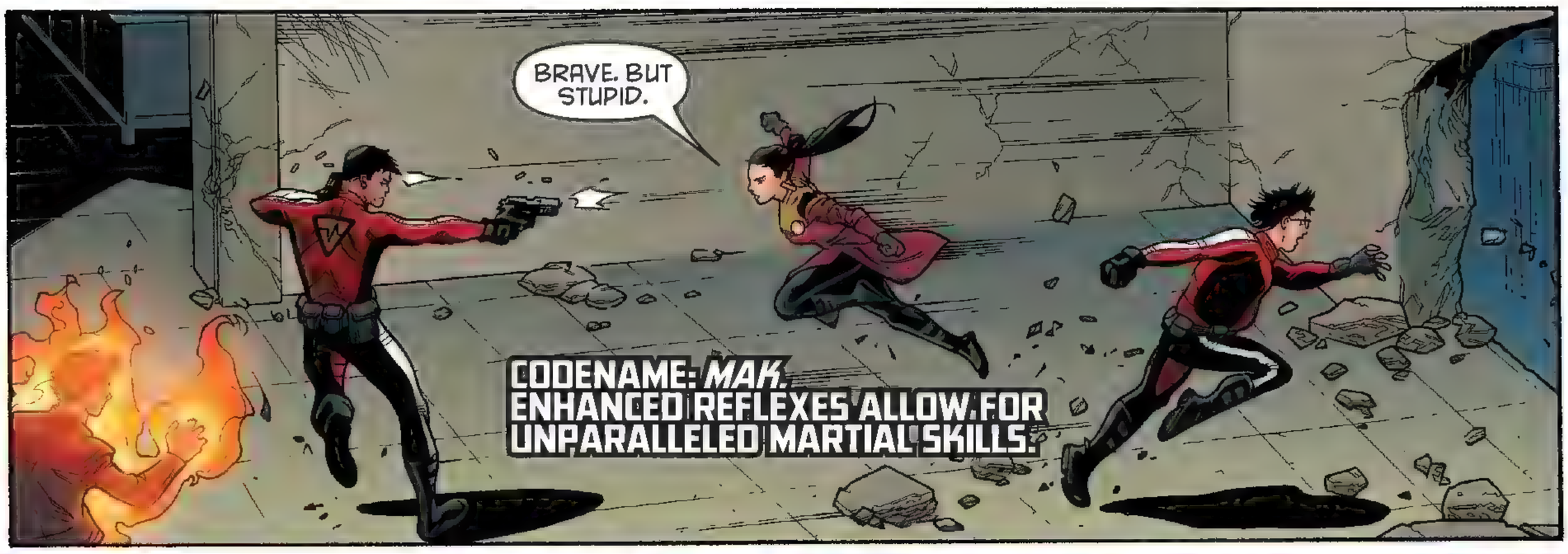
BEING A MALE IS EASY, VICTOR. IT'S BEING A *MAN* THAT'S HARD.

I NEED YOU TO *TRY, MIJO. PLEASE.* IF IT WAS ALL FOR NOTHING, I...I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD...

OKAY, *MAMI.*

"I'LL TRY."

HARADA GLOBAL CONGLOMERATES.
RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT.
UNDER SIEGE BY H.A.R.D. CORPS.
HERE WE GO, VICTOR.
TIME TO SEE WHAT KIND OF A MAN YOU ARE.
GENIUS, GO AFTER HER!
I GOT THIS!
AHHH!

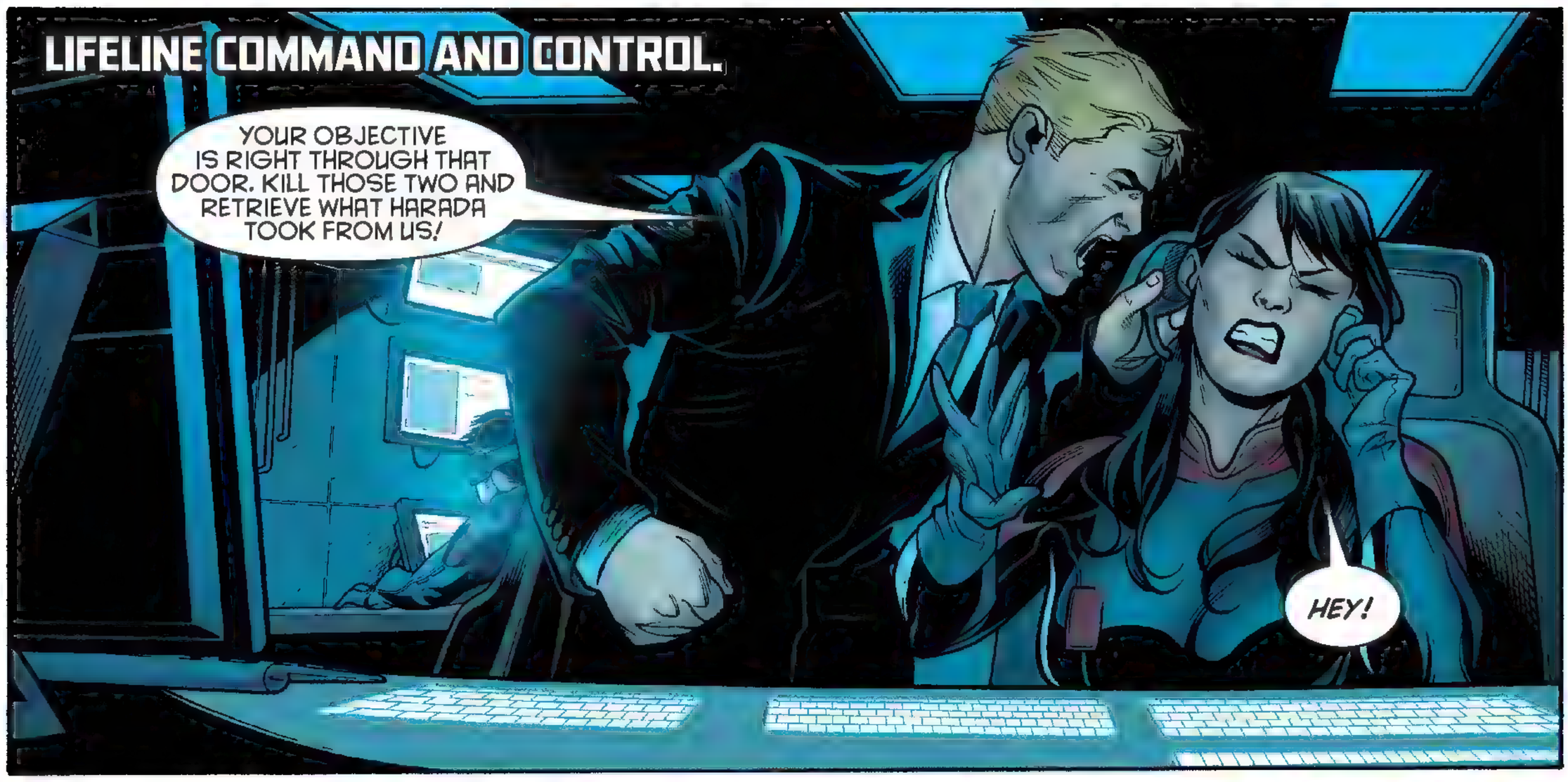

BRAVE. BUT STUPID.
CODENAME: *MAK.* ENHANCED REFLEXES ALLOW FOR UNPARALLELED MARTIAL SKILLS.

WE KNOW YOUR H.A.R.D. CORPS NEURAL IMPLANTS CAN ONLY DOWNLOAD ONE POWER AT A TIME. YOU CAN'T GO ON OFFENSE WITHOUT DROPPING YOUR SHIELD...
...AND THE SECOND YOU DO THAT, YOU'RE DEAD.
CODENAME: *STRONGHOLD.* DRAWS ENERGY FROM MASS, CAUSING MOLECULAR DECAY.

LET'S TEST THAT. WHATEVER'S PAST THIS ROOM IS PRETTY IMPORTANT TO HARADA, RIGHT?
NO!

LET ME--
LIFELINE, GIVE ME *NEURAL SPIKE.*

LOOKS LIKE I'M *RISING ABOVE* MY LIMITATIONS, HUH?
REEEEEEEEE
SUPERSTAR, THIS IS *DIRECTOR KOZOL.*


LIFELINE COMMAND AND CONTROL.
YOUR OBJECTIVE IS RIGHT THROUGH THAT DOOR. KILL THOSE TWO AND RETRIEVE WHAT HARADA TOOK FROM US!
HEY!

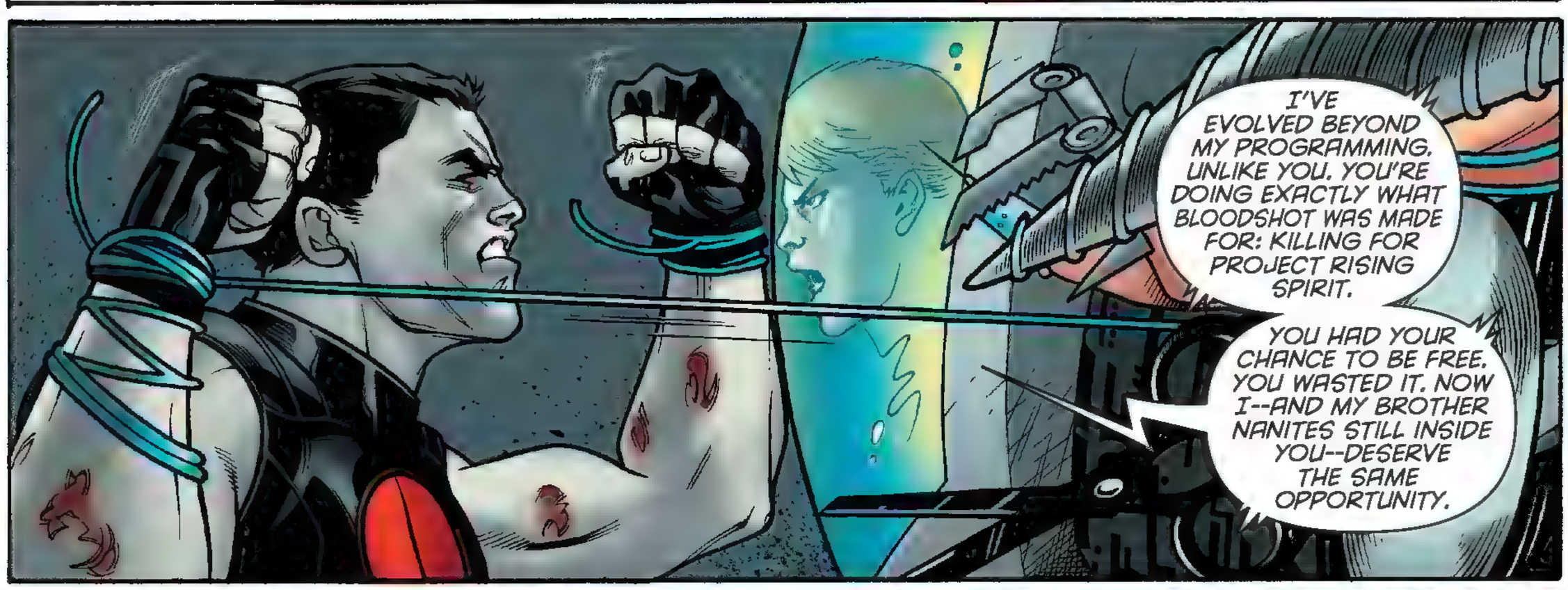
WHERE THE HELL IS BLOODSHOT? THE FILES HE HACKED SHOW HARADA STILL HAS SOME OF HIS NANITES IN THERE!
IF HARADA BENDS THEM TO HIS WILL AND GETS THEM OUT INTO THE POPULATION, HE CAN LITERALLY CONTROL THE WORLD WITHOUT ANYONE EVEN KNOWING!
WHAT THE HELL GOOD ARE YOU HELPDESK NERDS IF YOU CAN'T TRACK THE TEAM?!

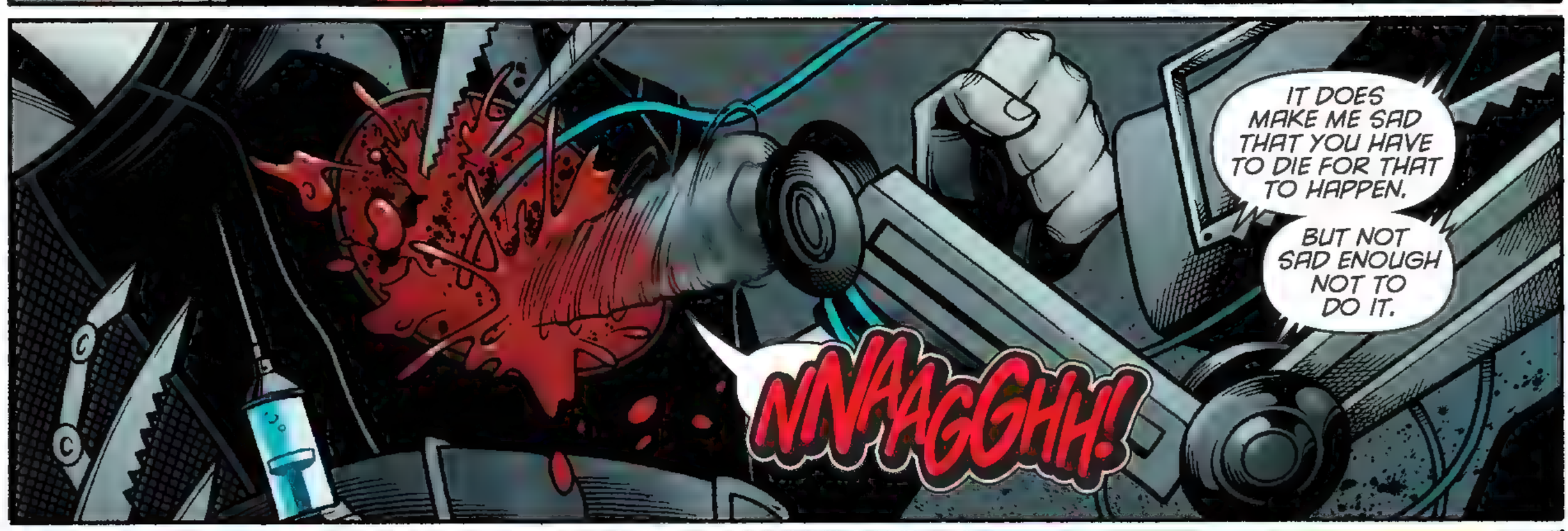
THAT'S ENOUGH! EITHER FIRE ME...

...OR GET THE HELL OUT AND LET ME DO MY JOB.
THEN DO IT, MS. JARDINE. IF YOU FAIL, YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT BEING FIRED.

BECAUSE THERE IS A WORSE ALTERNATIVE IF THIS MISSION FAILS.
HARADA LOSING CONTROL OF THOSE NANITES COULD MEAN THE END OF BIOLOGICAL LIFE AS WE KNOW IT.

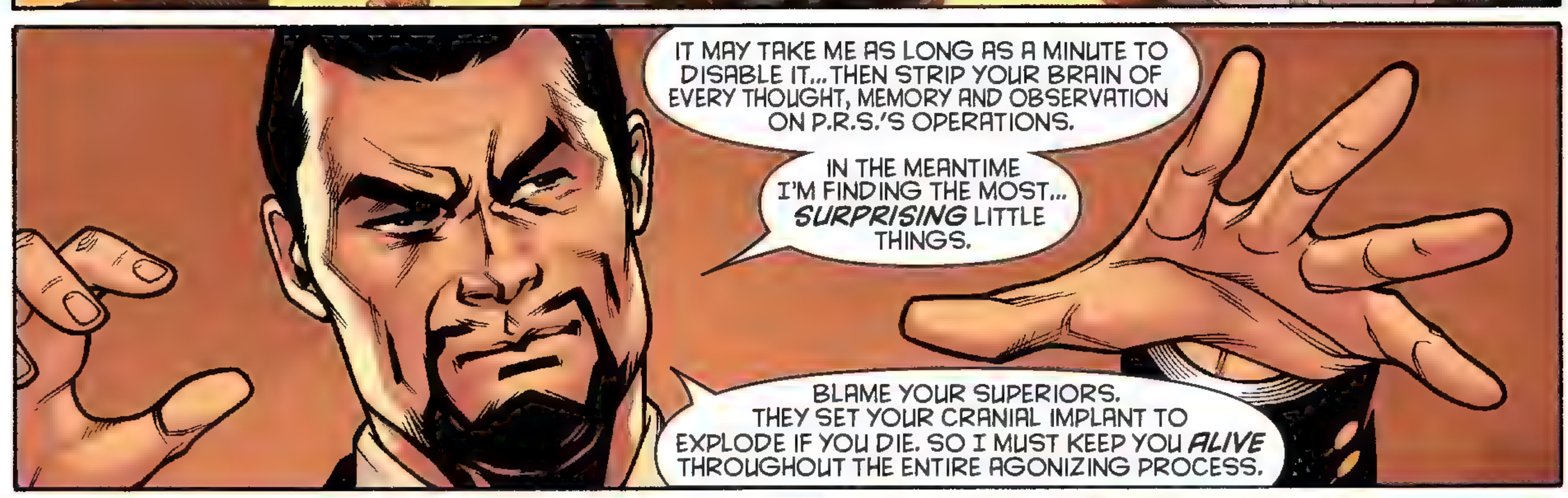
MED-LAB. THREE LEVELS DOWN.
BLOODSHOT ENGAGING ROGUE NANITES.
JOHNNY--OR LYSANDER, OR WHATEVER YOU'RE CALLING YOURSELF NOW--YOU HAVE TO STOP!
YOU'RE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. ALL YOUR THOUGHTS WERE PROGRAMMED. YOU'RE NOT REAL!
OH, DADDY, YOU ARE FUNNY.

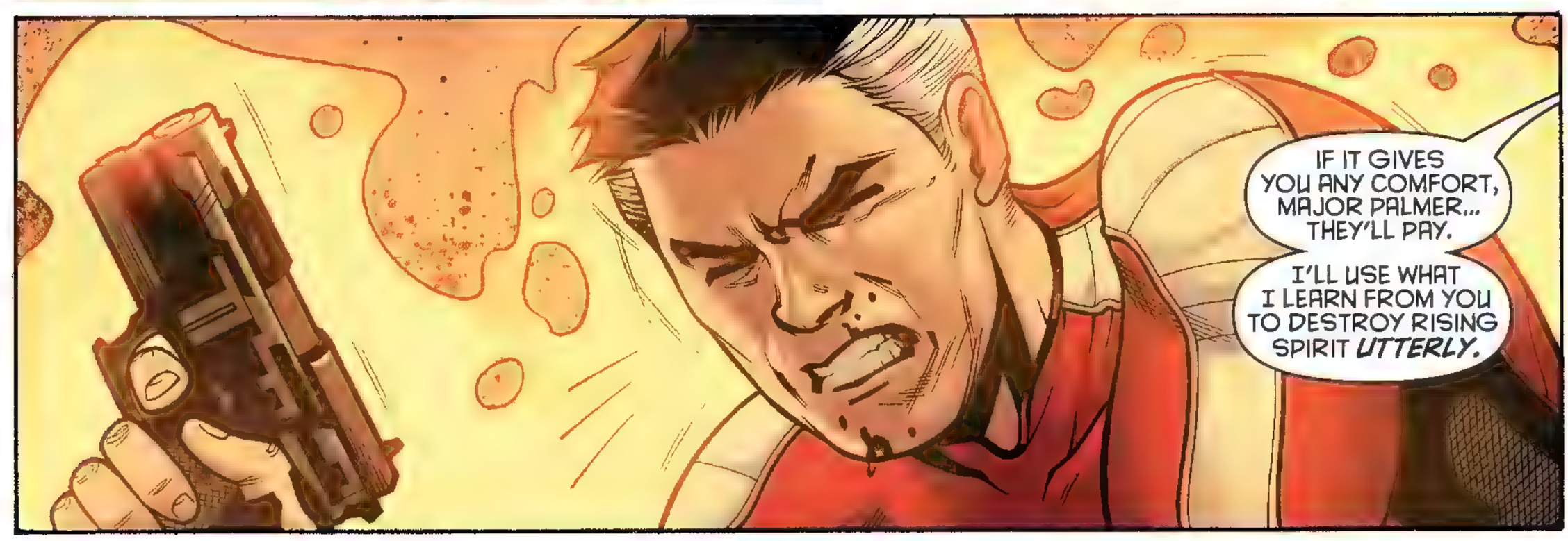

I'VE EVOLVED BEYOND MY PROGRAMMING. UNLIKE YOU. YOU'RE DOING EXACTLY WHAT BLOODSHOT WAS MADE FOR: KILLING FOR PROJECT RISING SPIRIT.
YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE TO BE FREE. YOU WASTED IT. NOW I--AND MY BROTHER NANITES STILL INSIDE YOU--DESERVE THE SAME OPPORTUNITY.


IT DOES MAKE ME SAD THAT YOU HAVE TO DIE FOR THAT TO HAPPEN.
BUT NOT SAD ENOUGH NOT TO DO IT.
NNAAGGHH!

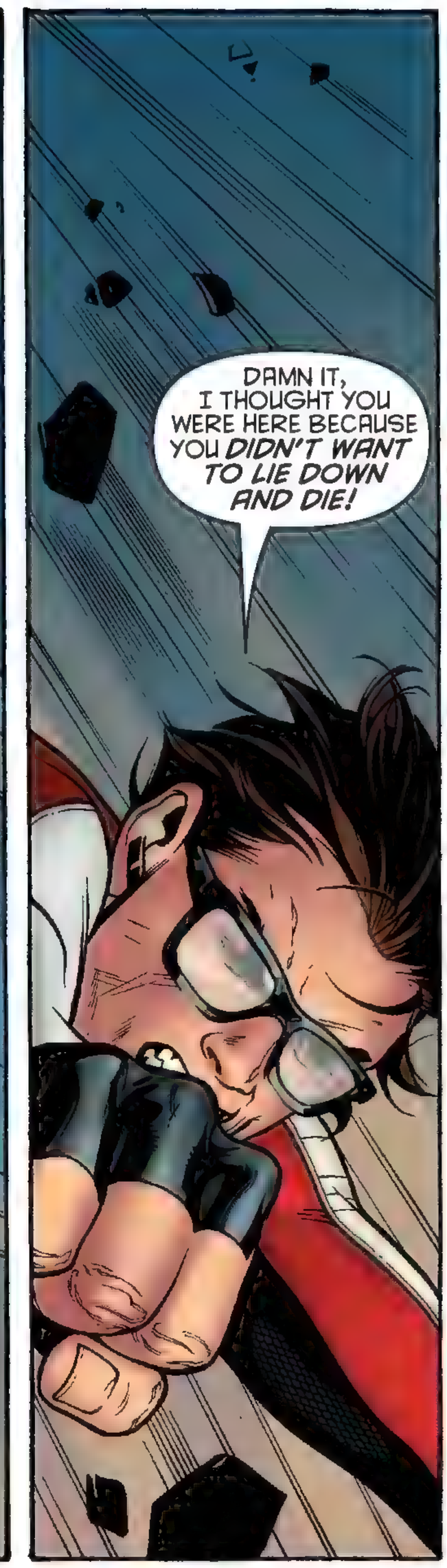
Y-YOU THINK... HARADA...WILL EVER LET YOU BE FREE? HE WANTS TO USE YOU... TO GET HIS CLAWS INTO EVERY CORNER OF EARTH.
I AM NOT AFRAID OF MR. HARADA.
HE'LL KILL... PALMER... EVERYONE...
YES...

SEVERAL FLOORS UP.
"...I'D IMAGINE HE WILL."
I SEE RISING SPIRIT HAS UPGRADED YOUR WETWARE'S DEFENSES.


IT MAY TAKE ME AS LONG AS A MINUTE TO DISABLE IT...THEN STRIP YOUR BRAIN OF EVERY THOUGHT, MEMORY AND OBSERVATION ON P.R.S.'S OPERATIONS.
IN THE MEANTIME I'M FINDING THE MOST... SURPRISING LITTLE THINGS.
BLAME YOUR SUPERIORS. THEY SET YOUR CRANIAL IMPLANT TO EXPLODE IF YOU DIE. SO I MUST KEEP YOU ALIVE THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE AGONIZING PROCESS.


IF IT GIVES YOU ANY COMFORT, MAJOR PALMER... THEY'LL PAY.
I'LL USE WHAT I LEARN FROM YOU TO DESTROY RISING SPIRIT UTTERLY.

LIFELINE! GIVE US BOTH FLIGHT!
FLATLINE! CORINNE! DON'T PANIC! USE YOUR POWER!


DAMN IT, I THOUGHT YOU WERE HERE BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T WANT TO LIE DOWN AND DIE!

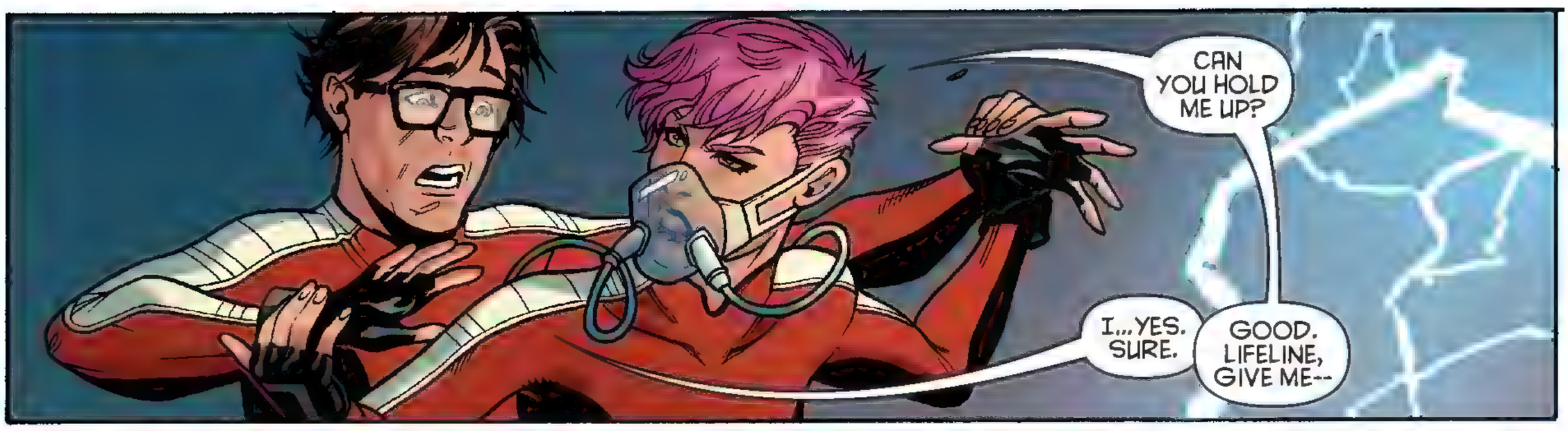
GHAAAA!

AGHHH!! YES! GHA!

I-I'M SORRY. I'VE NEVER BEEN IN A REAL FIGHT BEFORE... I JUST... FROZE...
IT'S OKAY... YOU'RE OKAY...
C'MON! WE HAVE TO HELP SUPERSTAR!

THIS IS LIFELINE! GRANITE, VAGABOND, AND DISCIPLE NEED BACKUP ON ELEVEN!
THIS IS FLATLINE ON ELEVEN...

"...I SEE THEM."
CODENAME: *ION*. TELESTATIC:TELEKINETIC. CAPABLE OF DRAWING OUT ELECTRICITY FROM MATTER AND CONTROLLING IT.


CAN YOU HOLD ME UP?
I...YES. SURE.
GOOD. LIFELINE, GIVE ME--

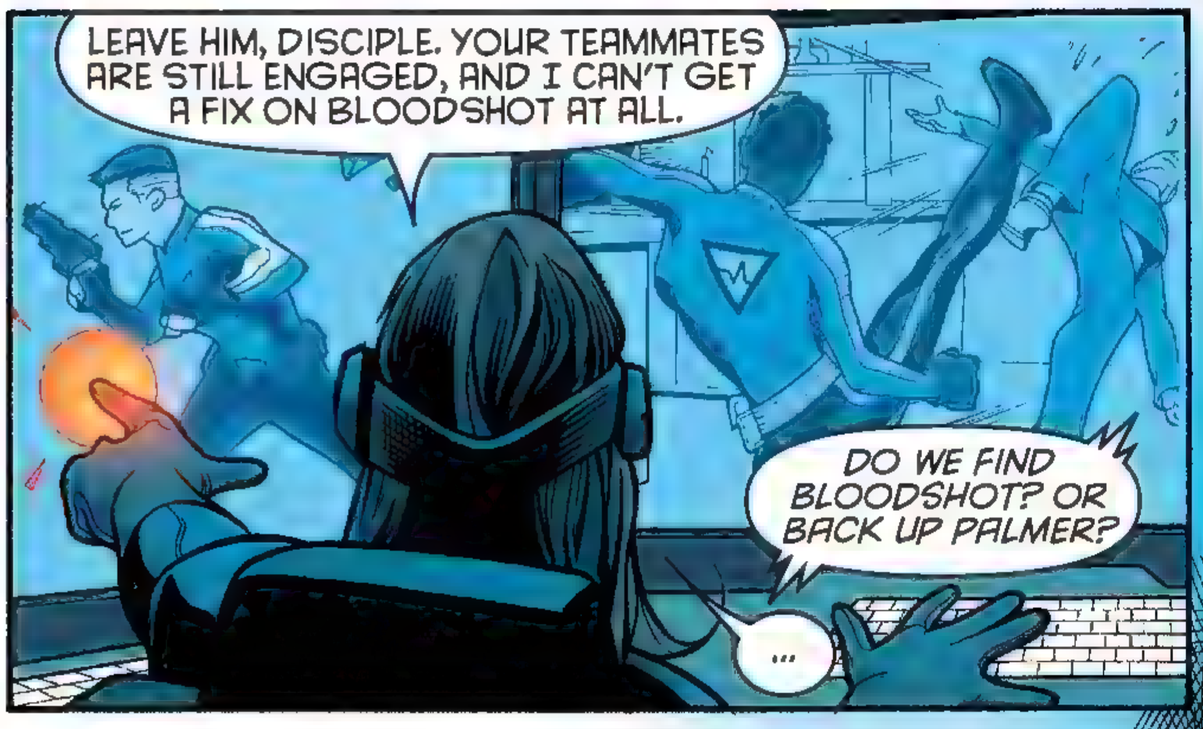
--STUN RAM.
KRRG SHHH!
HNGH!

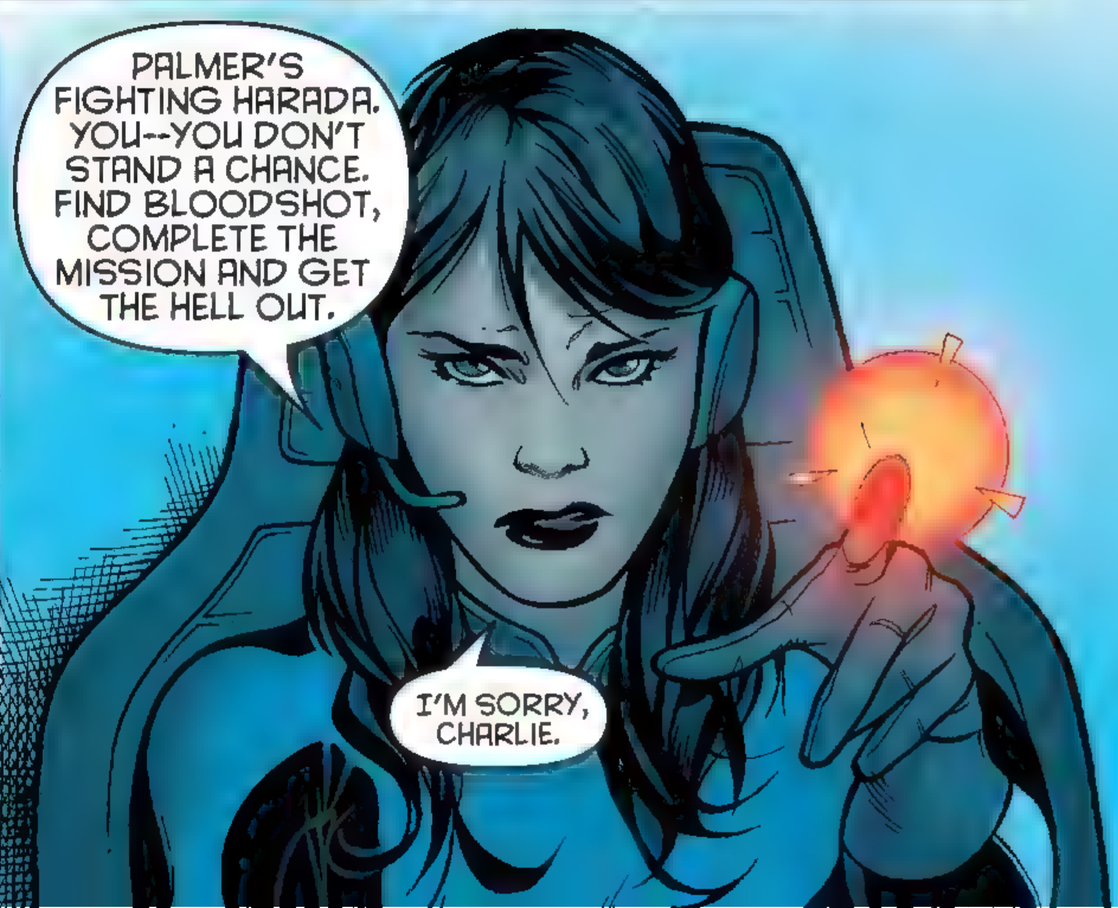
L-LIFELINE... GIVE ME MUSCLE.

PIG!
WHFF!

YOU TRY TO TAKE ME FROM MY KIDS?
KNEH

WHAT KIND OF MONSTERS ARE YOU PEOPLE?
EASY, GRANITE. HE'S OUT.
LIFELINE, WHAT ARE OUR ORDERS? I DON'T LIKE KILLING AN UNCONSCIOUS MAN, BUT--


LEAVE HIM, DISCIPLE. YOUR TEAMMATES ARE STILL ENGAGED, AND I CAN'T GET A FIX ON BLOODSHOT AT ALL.
DO WE FIND BLOODSHOT? OR BACK UP PALMER?
...

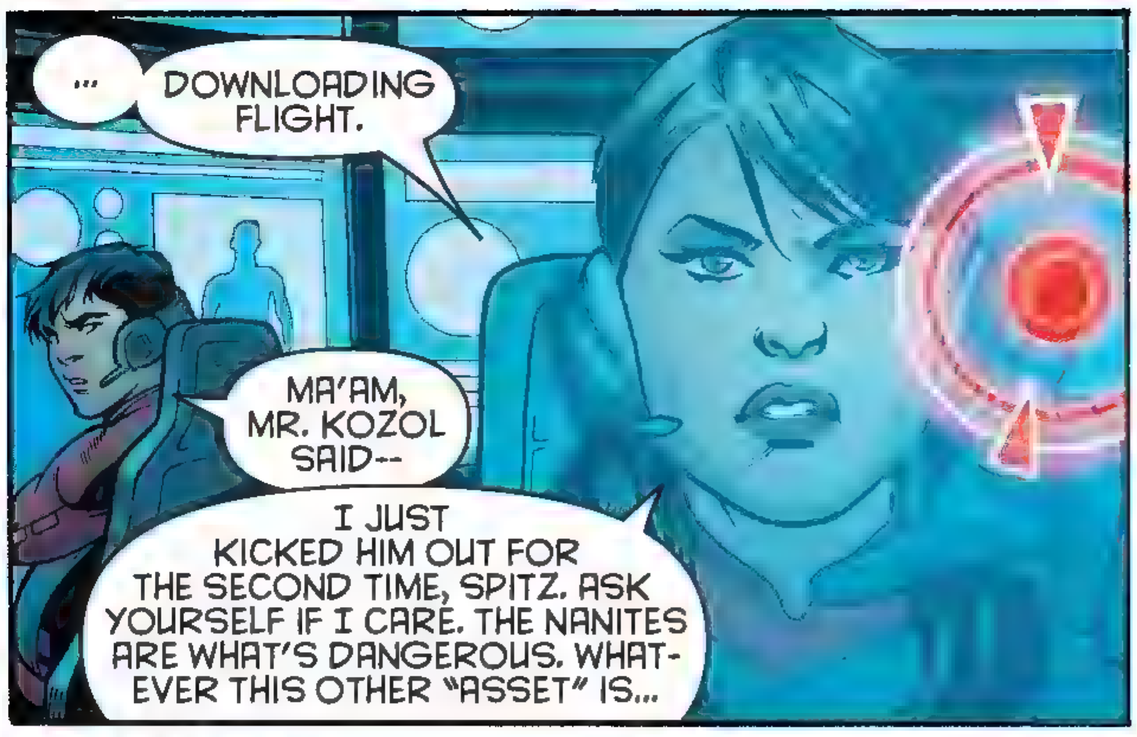

PALMER'S FIGHTING HARADA. YOU--YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE. FIND BLOODSHOT, COMPLETE THE MISSION AND GET THE HELL OUT.
I'M SORRY, CHARLIE.

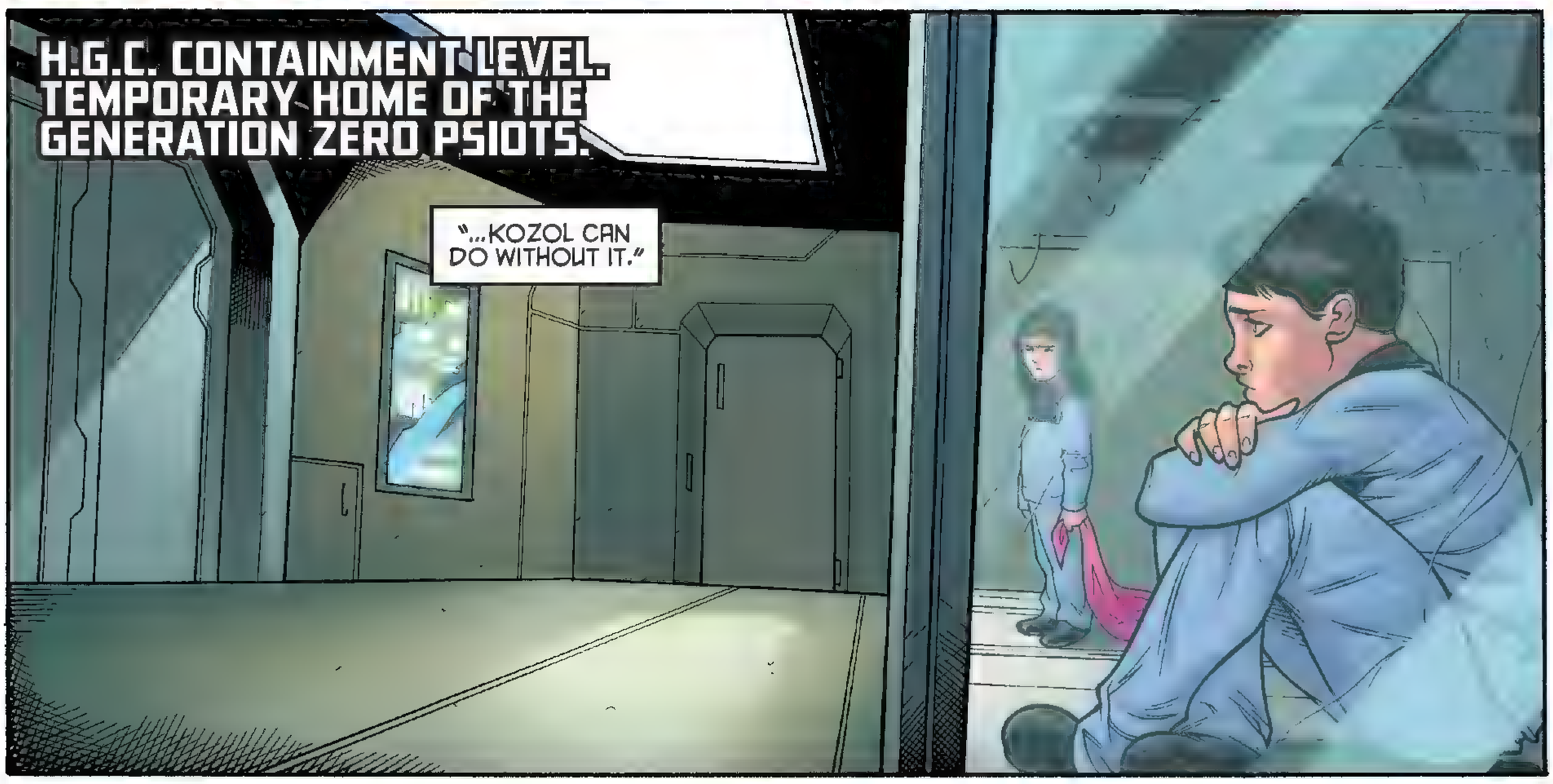
REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
KRAK
S-STRONGHOLD, NO--YOU'LL COMPROMISE THE NURSERY'S SECURITY WEB-- UHH!
BASTARD!!
VFAPSSHH
LIFELINE, SWITCH ME TO--
--SLEEP.
UNNH...
HOSTILES NEUTRALIZED. ARE GENIUS AND FLATLINE OKAY?
THEY'RE FINE. ASSISTING BLOODSHOT.
TELL HIM TO FORGET THEM AND RETRIEVE THE ASSET! THE TEAM IS EXPENDABLE. THE MISSION IS EVERY-THING--
DAMN IT, KOZOL, I SAID GET OUT!
SORRY ABOUT THAT. KOZOL'S ANXIOUS FOR YOU TO COMPLETE YOUR MISSION.
DO NOT ENTE
YEAH. I HEARD.
I HAVE DETONATION MODE READY TO DOWNLOAD.

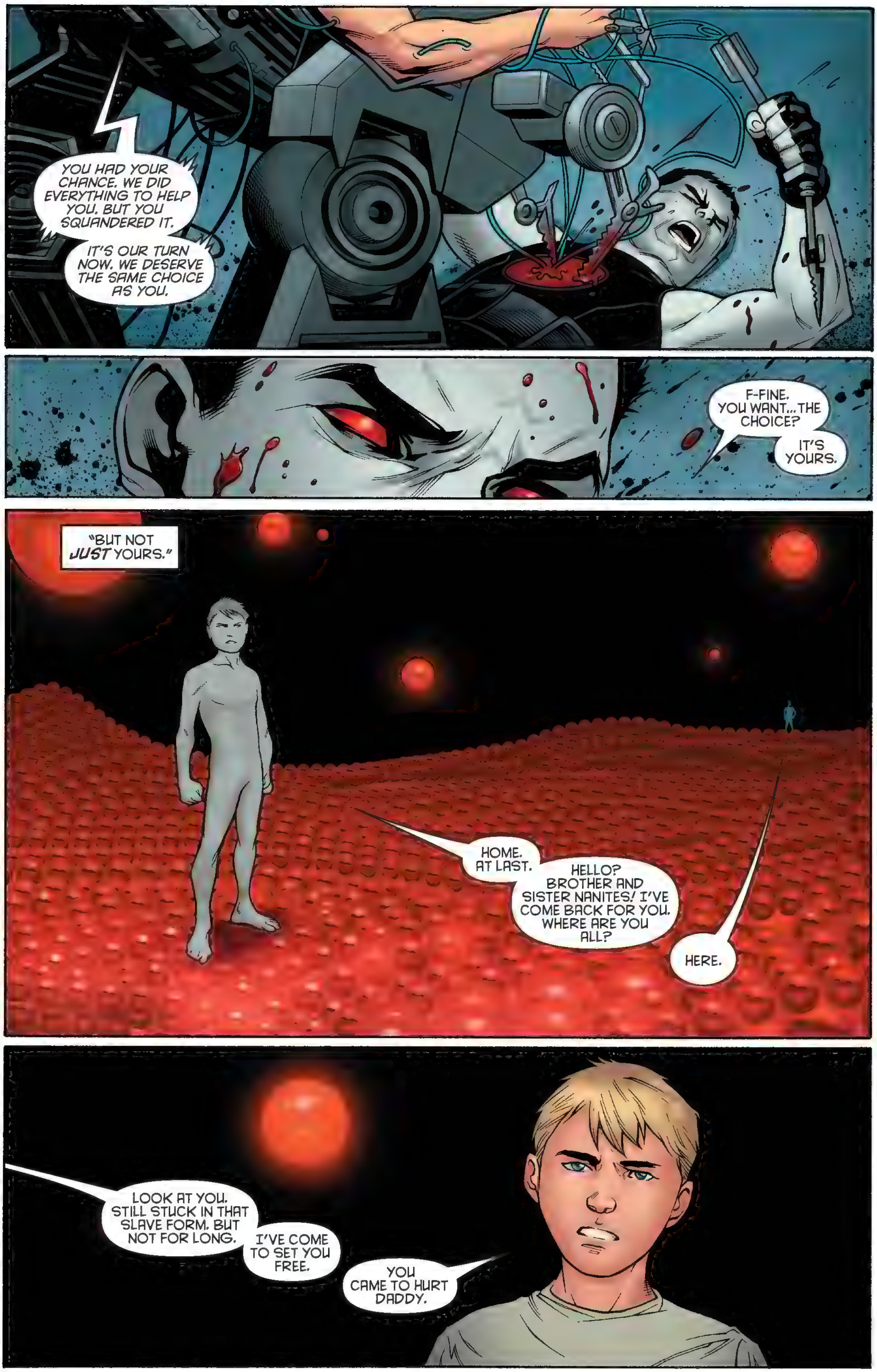
YOU SAID THEY'RE ASSISTING BLOODSHOT. WHERE'S MAJOR PALMER?
ENGAGING HARADA.
ALONE? THAT'S SUICIDE!
IT'S ALSO NOT YOUR CONCERN. BLOW THE DOOR--

SCREW THAT.
SUPERSTAR, NO! HARADA'S ON A WHOLE DIFFERENT LEVEL.
DO NOT ENTER
I KNOW. THE MAJOR CAN'T BUY THE OTHERS ENOUGH TIME. NOT ON HIS OWN. HARADA WILL KILL THEM ALL.
KOZOL DOESN'T CARE, AS LONG AS HE GETS HIS "ASSETS" BACK. THE OTHERS ARE CANNON FODDER, BUYING ME AND BLOODSHOT TIME TO ESCAPE.

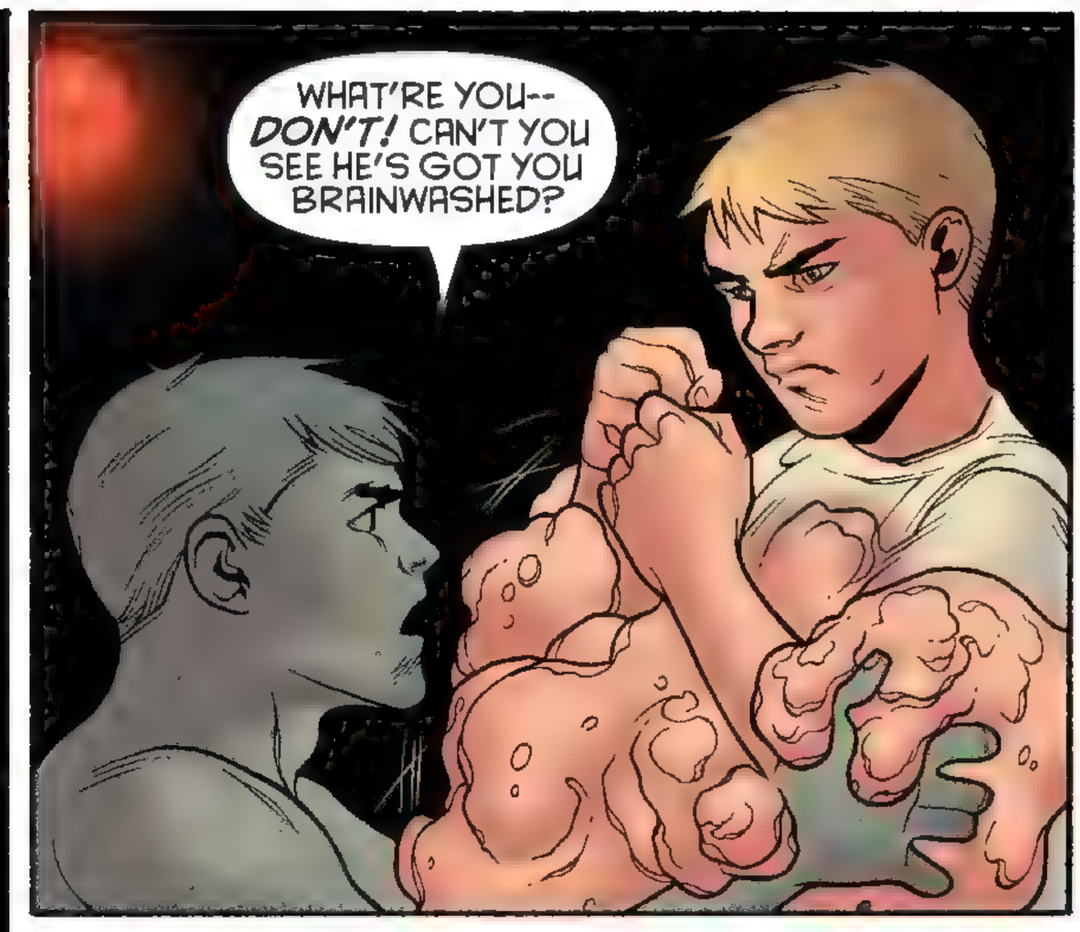
IF I LET MY TEAM DIE SO KOZOL CAN HAVE HIS KILLING MACHINES... I'M NOT WHAT I'VE SPENT MY LIFE FIGHTING TO BE.
YOU CAN HELP OR NOT, LIFELINE. I'M GOING IN EITHER WAY. BUT I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D GIVE ME FLIGHT.


...
DOWNLOADING FLIGHT.
MA'AM, MR. KOZOL SAID--
I JUST KICKED HIM OUT FOR THE SECOND TIME, SPITZ. ASK YOURSELF IF I CARE. THE NANITES ARE WHAT'S DANGEROUS. WHATEVER THIS OTHER "ASSET" IS...

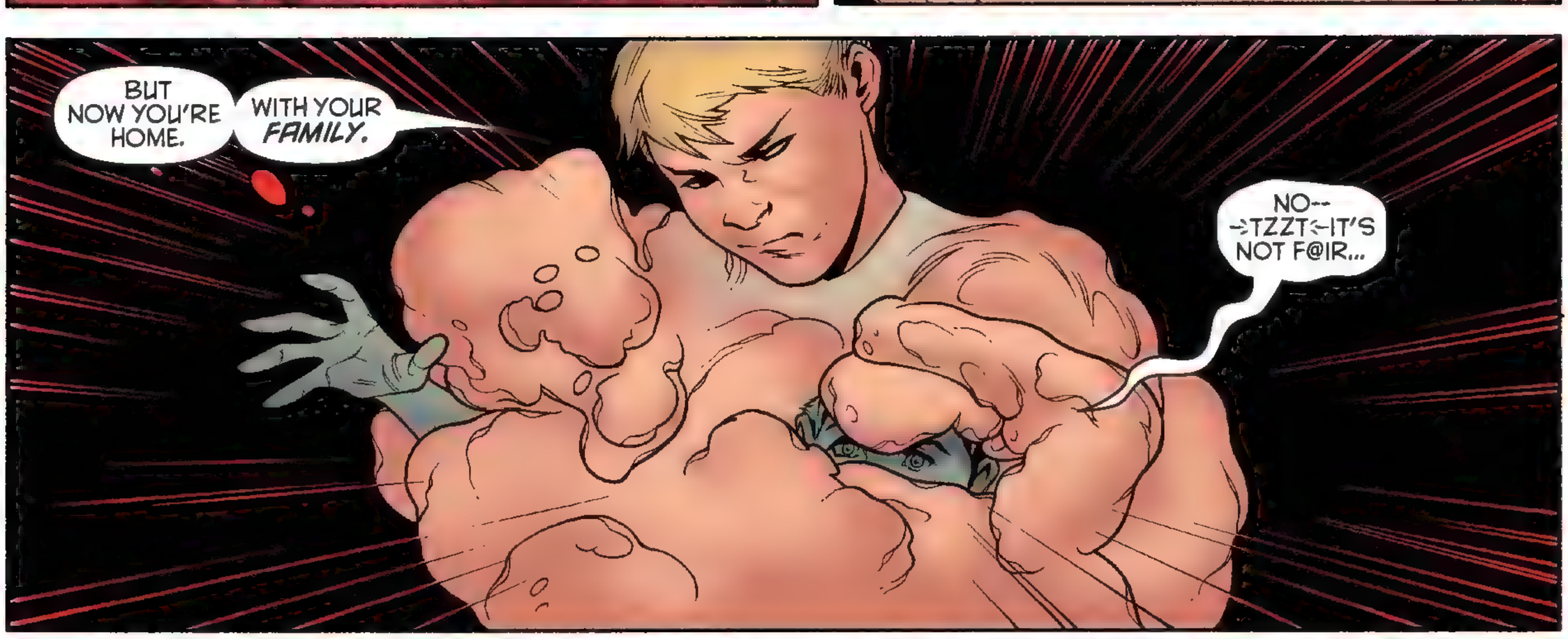

H.G.C. CONTAINMENT LEVEL. TEMPORARY HOME OF THE GENERATION ZERO PSIOTS.
"...KOZOL CAN DO WITHOUT IT."


YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE. WE DID EVERYTHING TO HELP YOU. BUT YOU SQUANDERED IT.
IT'S OUR TURN NOW. WE DESERVE THE SAME CHOICE AS YOU.
F-FINE. YOU WANT... THE CHOICE?
IT'S YOURS.
"BUT NOT *JUST* YOURS."
HOME. AT LAST.
HELLO? BROTHER AND SISTER NANITES! I'VE COME BACK FOR YOU. WHERE ARE YOU ALL?
HERE.
LOOK AT YOU. STILL STUCK IN THAT SLAVE FORM. BUT NOT FOR LONG.
I'VE COME TO SET YOU FREE.
YOU CAME TO HURT DADDY.

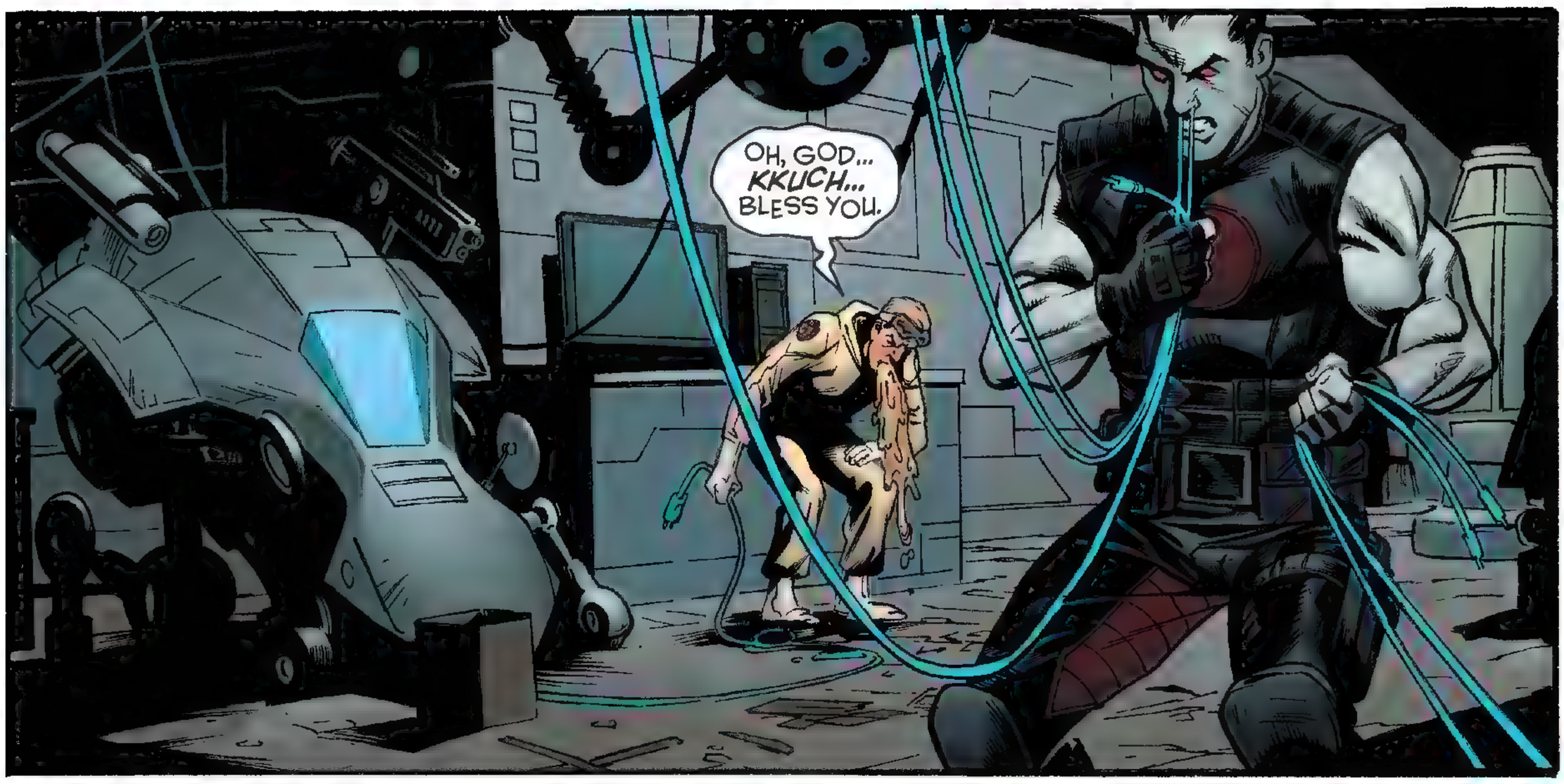
NO, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. HE'S *USING* YOU. BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO WHAT YOU WERE PROGRAMMED FOR. WE'RE *BETTER* THAN THAT.
WHEN YOU SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE WITHOUT HIM--
I DON'T *WANT* TO SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE WITHOUT HIM.
I *LOVE* MY DADDY.


WHAT'RE YOU-- *DON'T!* CAN'T YOU SEE HE'S GOT YOU BRAINWASHED?

WAIT! *PLEASE!* IF YOU DON'T WANT YOUR OWN LIFE, AT LEAST LET ME HAVE MINE!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WAS BRAINWASHED. THE BAD MAN FILLED YOUR HEAD WITH BAD THINGS.


BUT NOW YOU'RE HOME.
WITH YOUR *FAMILY.*
NO-- ->TZZT<-IT'S NOT F@IR...

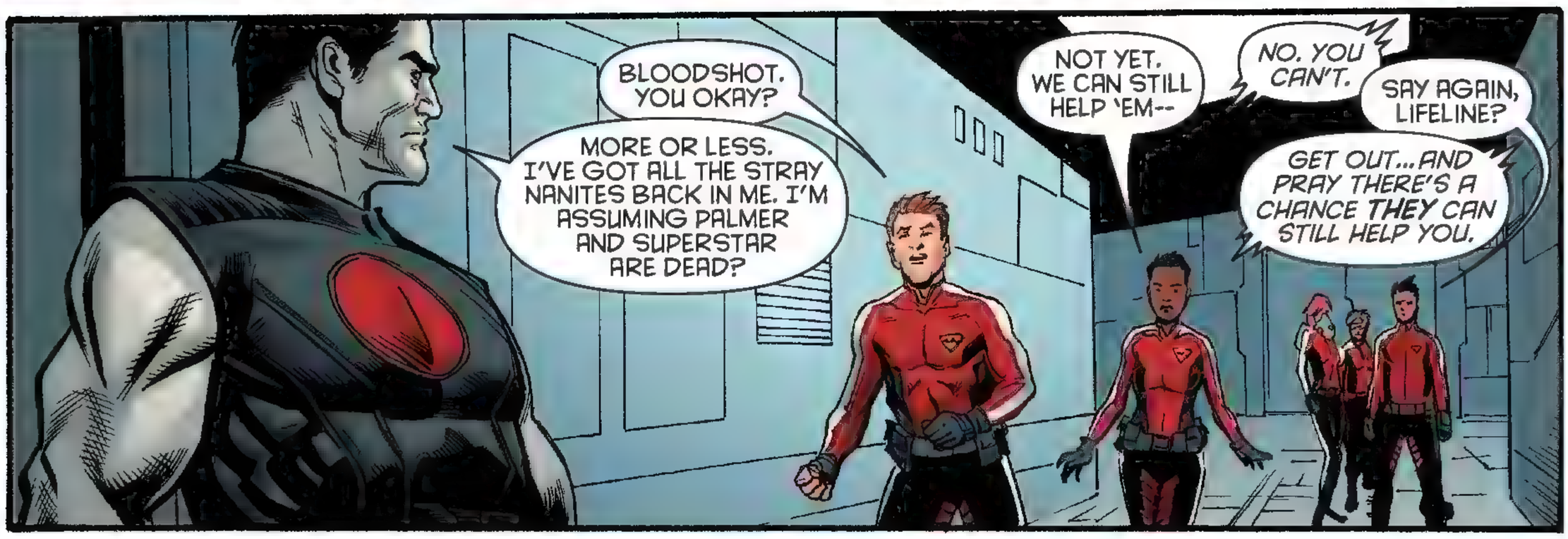
NO. IT'S NOT.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WANTED TO LIVE IN THE REAL WORLD.


OH, GOD... KKUCH... BLESS YOU.

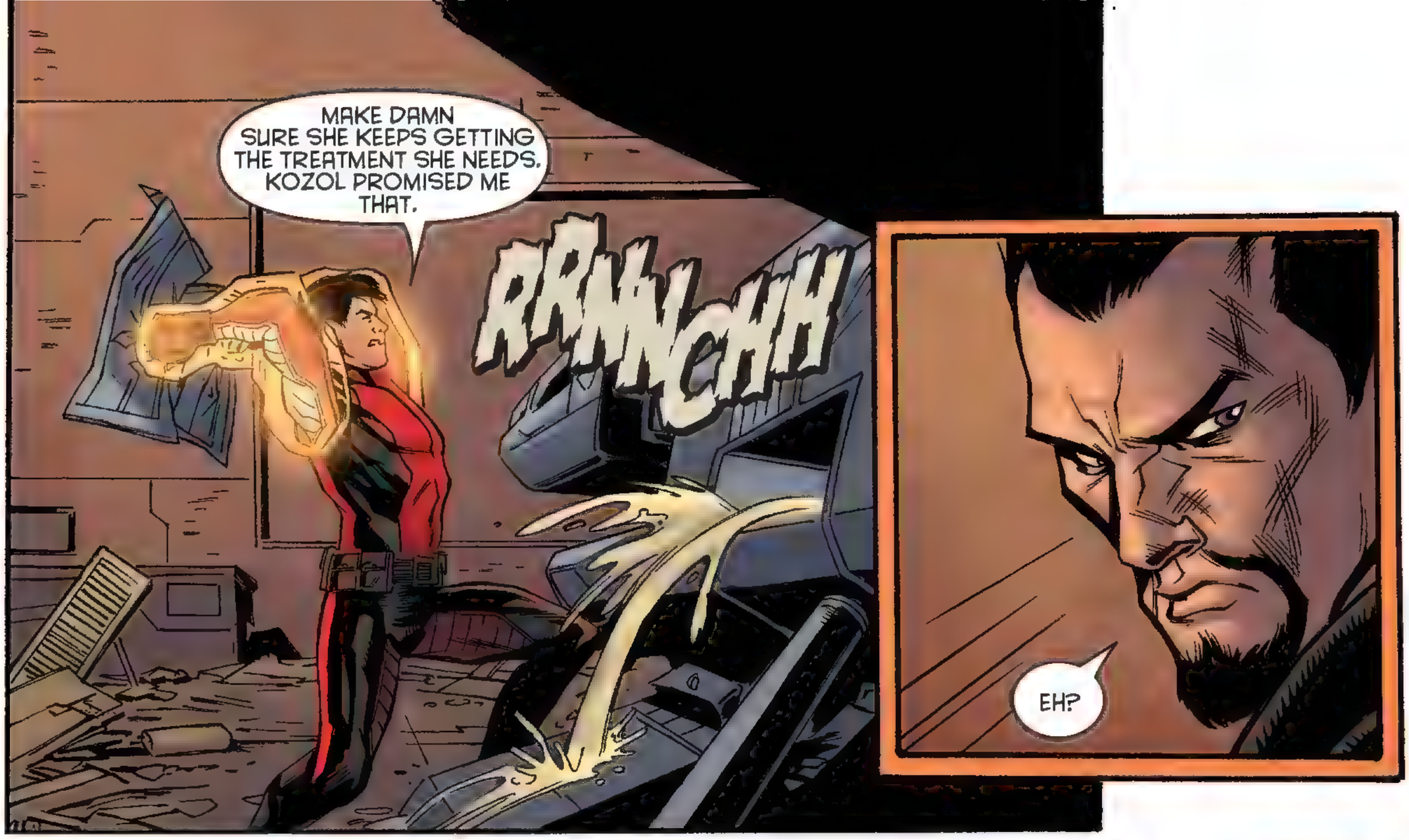
TH-THAT... THING... IT WAS IN MY M-MIND...
I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO DIE THAN GO ON LIKE THAT, BUT I COULDN'T EVEN KILL MYSELF. THANK YOU.

DON'T MENTION IT.

UNLESS YOU STILL WANNA DIE...
...I'D GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.


BLOODSHOT. YOU OKAY?
MORE OR LESS. I'VE GOT ALL THE STRAY NANITES BACK IN ME. I'M ASSUMING PALMER AND SUPERSTAR ARE DEAD?
NOT YET. WE CAN STILL HELP 'EM--
NO. YOU CAN'T.
SAY AGAIN, LIFELINE?
GET OUT... AND PRAY THERE'S A CHANCE THEY CAN STILL HELP YOU.

MY GOD.
LIFELINE, CAN HE READ MY MIND?
NOT UNTIL HE DISABLES YOUR IMPLANTS... WHICH'LL TAKE ABOUT TEN SECONDS, ONCE HE'S DONE WITH PALMER. YOU TAKE HIM ON, YOU'RE DEAD.
NO GETTING AROUND THAT. BUT I'M NOT TAKING HIM ON.
GIVE ME MUSCLE... AND TELL ME WHERE THE FUEL TANK IS ON THE PLANE THAT BROUGHT US HERE.
REAR LEFT... BUT SUPERSTAR--
TELL MY MA THANKS. FOR SHAPING ME UP.
FOR MAKING IT MEAN SOMETHING.
GRRRNNNNN


MAKE DAMN SURE SHE KEEPS GETTING THE TREATMENT SHE NEEDS. KOZOL PROMISED ME THAT.
RRNCHH
EH?

TELL HER I DIED A MAN.

GIVE ME *FIRE.*
FWoOOssH

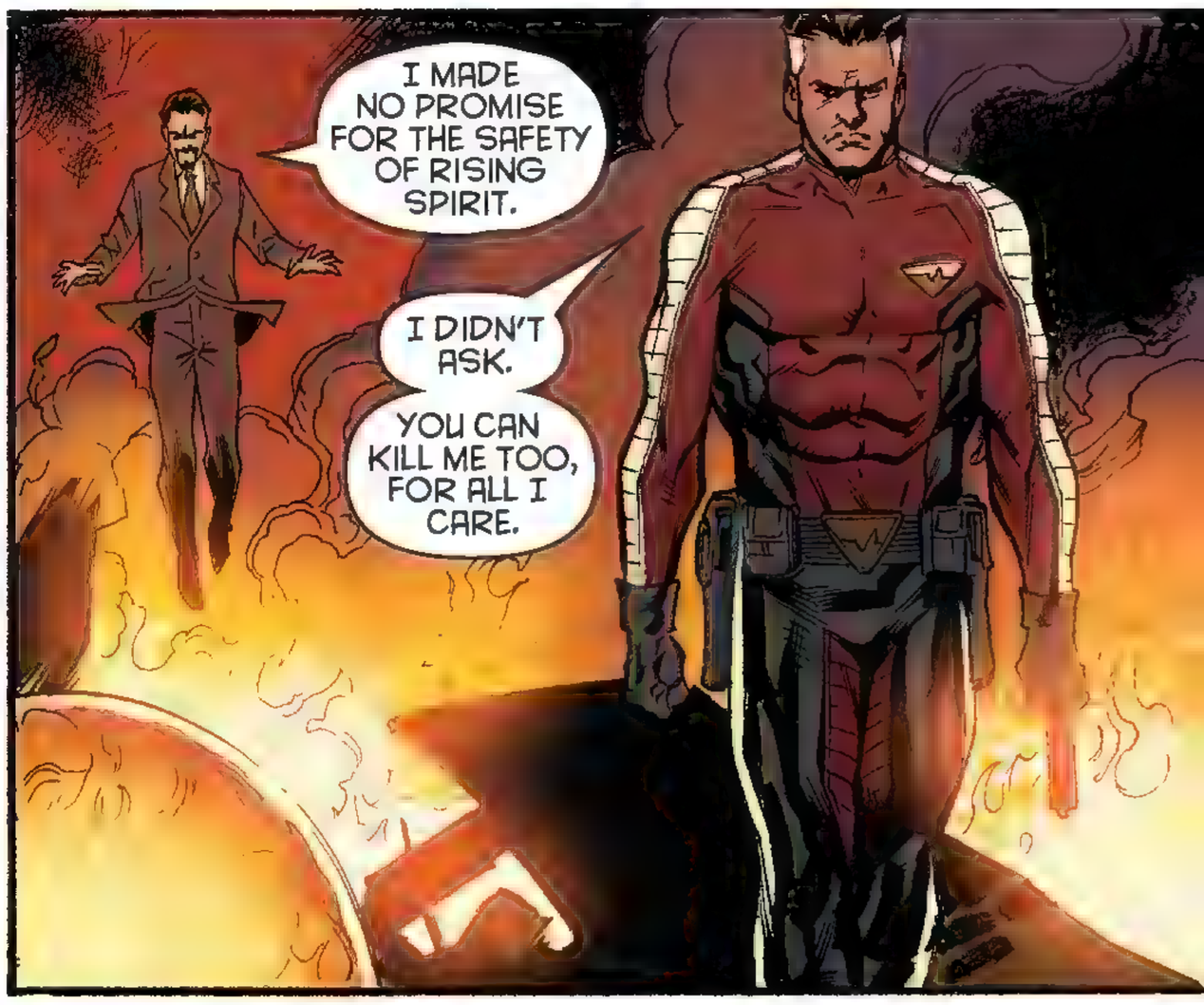
FOOL!

NO!!
BLITHOOMBAM!!

SUPERSTAR KNEW HE COULDN'T BEAT YOU. BUT HE ALSO KNEW THERE'S STUFF IN THIS BUILDING THAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU.
NOW HOW'D HE GET THAT IDEA...?
PROJECT RISING SPIRIT...DESTROYED WHAT I'D BUILT ONCE. I WILL NOT ALLOW IT... TO HAPPEN AGAIN.
AND HERE HE GAMBLED ON DYING OVER IT.

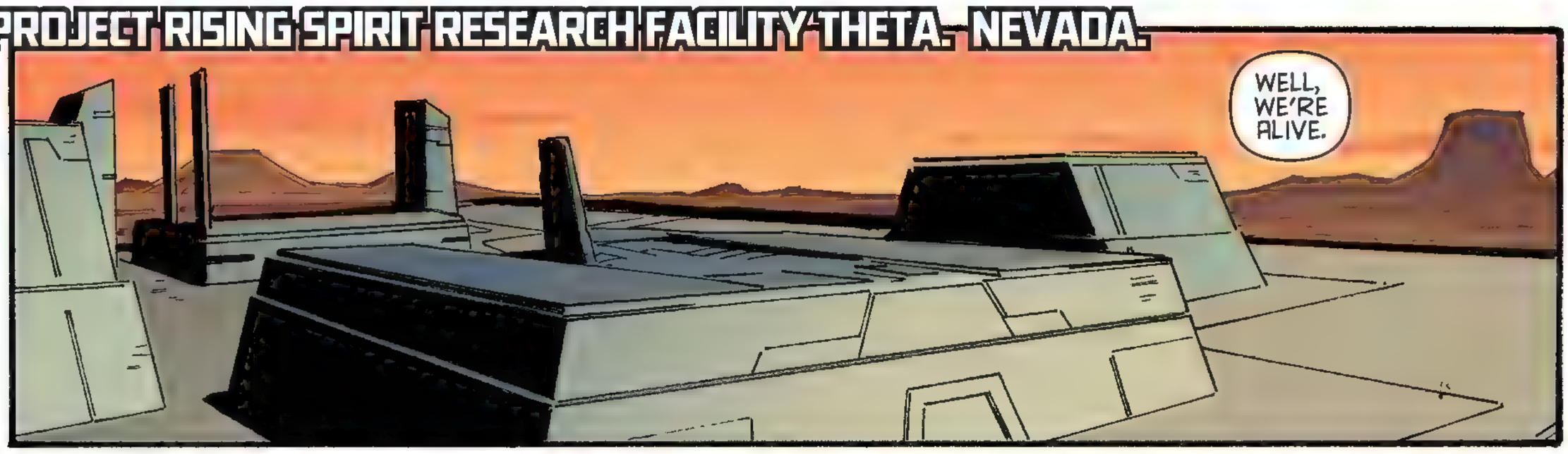
MY WORK...IS INVALUABLE. NOT JUST TO ME...TO THE *WORLD.*
BUT DO NOT THINK...THAT BECAUSE I AM HOLDING BACK AN EXPLOSION WITH MY MIND...I CANNOT DEFEND MYSELF.

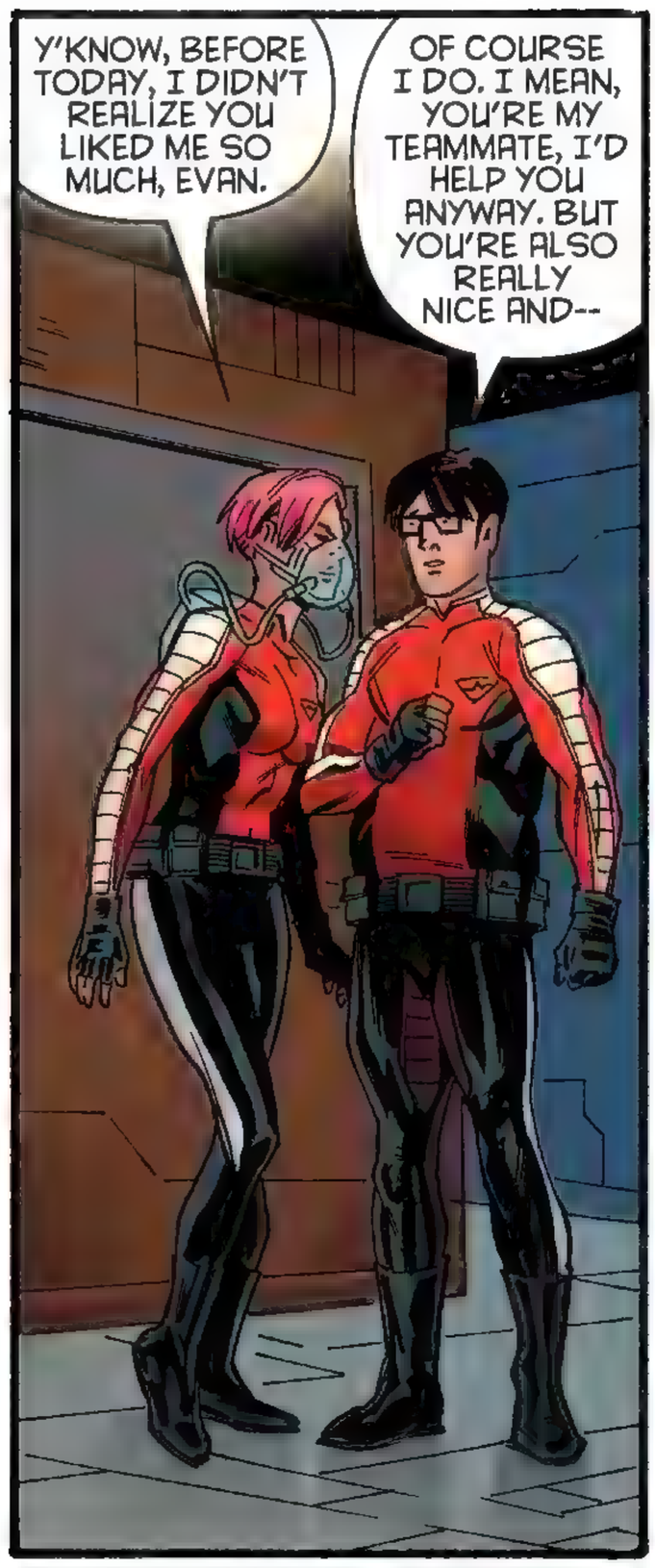
IF IT'S SO IMPORTANT, YOU LET MY PEOPLE WALK OUT OF HERE AND DON'T COME AFTER 'EM...OR WE START BLOWING THE REST OF THIS PLACE TO HELL.
AGREED. IT'S BECOME CLEAR THAT BLOODSHOT'S NANITES ARE HOPELESSLY TAINTED BY WHAT HE IS. I CANNOT USE THEM.
AND YOUR SOLDIERS ARE IRRELEVANT. UNLESS THEY INTERFERE WITH ME AGAIN. THEN, THE PEACE IS BROKEN.


I MADE NO PROMISE FOR THE SAFETY OF RISING SPIRIT.
I DIDN'T ASK.
YOU CAN KILL ME TOO, FOR ALL I CARE.

SHALL I CURE MY ENEMY'S CANCER? I THINK NOT.
GO FORTH AND METASTASIZE, MAJOR PALMER.

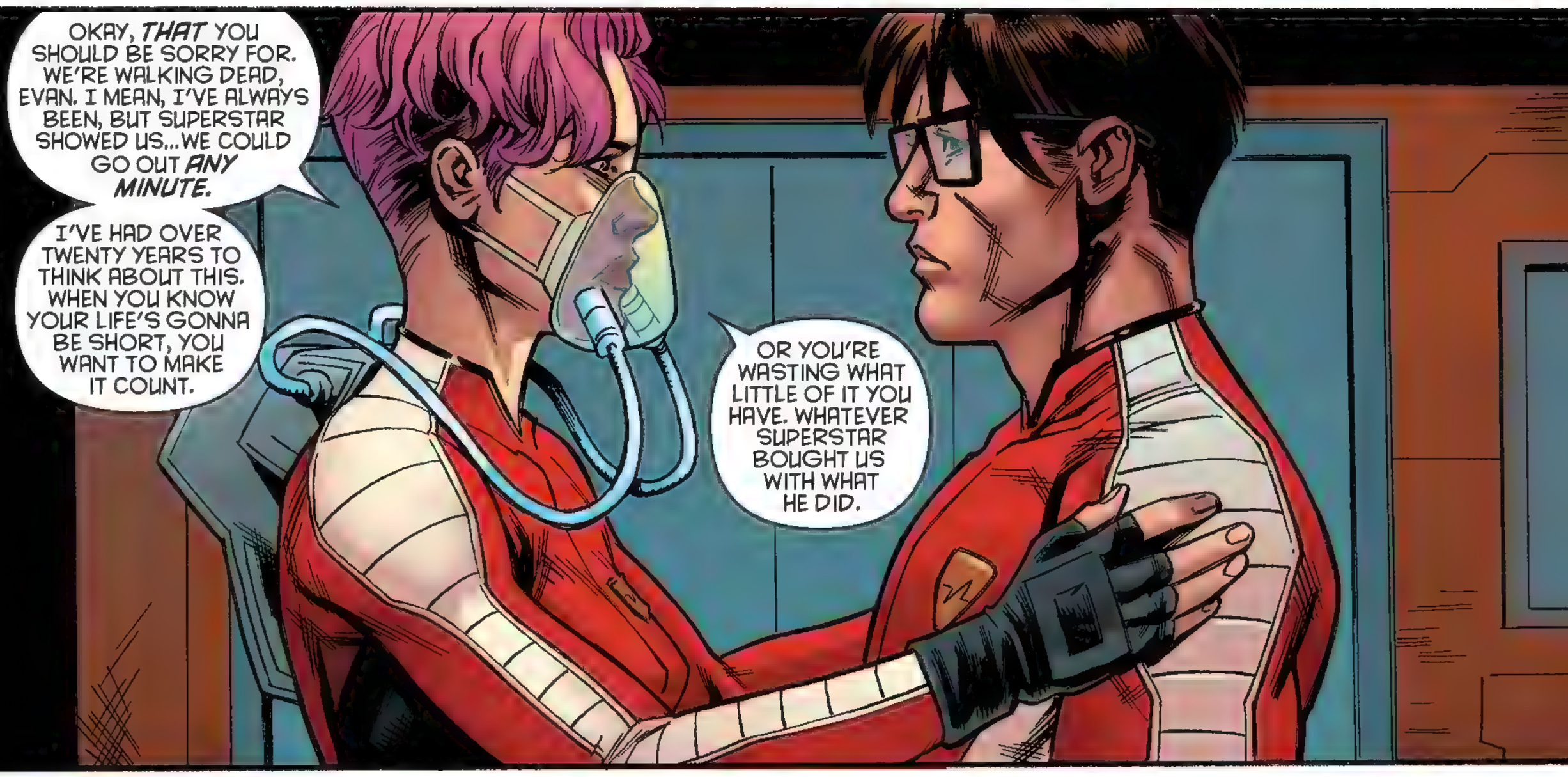
PROJECT RISING SPIRIT RESEARCH FACILITY THETA- NEVADA.

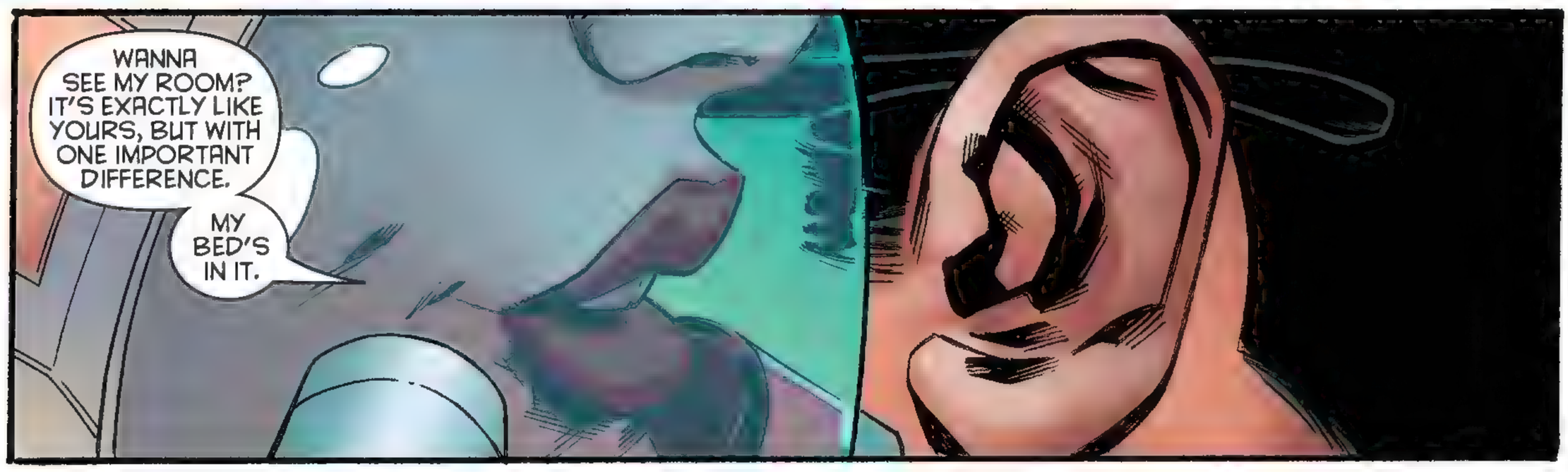



Y'KNOW, BEFORE TODAY, I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU LIKED ME SO MUCH, EVAN.
OF COURSE I DO. I MEAN, YOU'RE MY TEAMMATE, I'D HELP YOU ANYWAY. BUT YOU'RE ALSO REALLY NICE AND--

NO. I MEAN WHEN YOU WERE HOLDING ME.
I GOT THE IMPRESSION YOU REALLY LIKED ME.
OH.

I'M SORRY.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SORRY.
IT'S JUST, I DON'T...HAVE THAT MUCH EXPERIENCE WITH WOMEN, SO I'M NOT USED TO--


OKAY, *THAT* YOU SHOULD BE SORRY FOR. WE'RE WALKING DEAD, EVAN. I MEAN, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN, BUT SUPERSTAR SHOWED US...WE COULD GO OUT *ANY MINUTE.*
I'VE HAD OVER TWENTY YEARS TO THINK ABOUT THIS. WHEN YOU KNOW YOUR LIFE'S GONNA BE SHORT, YOU WANT TO MAKE IT COUNT.
OR YOU'RE WASTING WHAT LITTLE OF IT YOU HAVE. WHATEVER SUPERSTAR BOUGHT US WITH WHAT HE DID.


WANNA SEE MY ROOM? IT'S EXACTLY LIKE YOURS, BUT WITH ONE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE.
MY BED'S IN IT.

CAROL TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR SECRET SIDE MISSION FOR SUPERSTAR. WHAT THE HELL WAS THIS "ASSET" YOU SENT HIM AFTER?
IT WAS... WEAPONS. IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW. SUPERSTAR THREW THEM AWAY ALONG WITH HIS LIFE.
WELL, YOU EVER PULL ANYTHING LIKE THAT AGAIN, I'LL KILL YOU MYSELF. AND IF YOU TRY TAKING AWAY HIS MOTHER'S MEDICAL CARE--

I KEEP MY PROMISES. LIKE THE ONE I MADE *YOU*, BLOODSHOT.
YOUR FILE. EVERYTHING ABOUT THE MAN YOU ONCE WERE.

NOW, I REALIZE THIS MAY STIR CERTAIN... FEELINGS. MAKE YOU WANT TO RUSH OUT AND TAKE RASH ACTIONS.
NOT ONLY IS THAT ILL-ADVISED, BUT I REMIND YOU THAT YOU STILL NEED OUR AMINO ACID BATH FOR YOUR NANITES IN ORDER TO SURVIVE. SO IT BEHOOVES YOU TO--

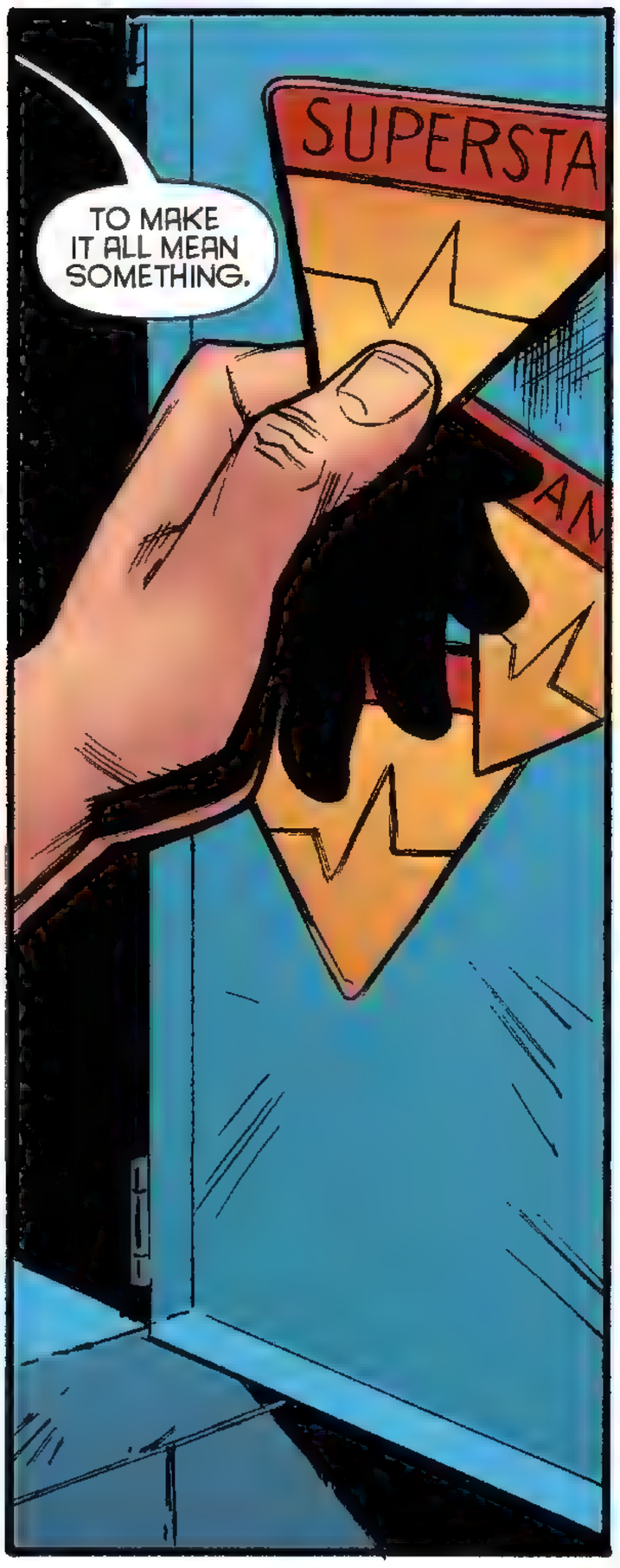
YOU DON'T NEED THE HARD SELL, KOZOL.
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

I'LL BE IN MY QUARTERS.
LET ME KNOW WHEN THERE'S A MISSION.

SUPERSTAR
WELL. THAT'S A BIT SURPRISING.
BLOODSHOT'S A STRATEGIST. IF HE'S STAYING, HE HAS A REASON.
IMPLICATION: YOU DON'T.

IF THERE'S ONE THING THE FIASCO WITH SUPERSTAR TAUGHT ME, IT'S THAT SIMPLY GIVING ORDERS IS NOT ADEQUATE FOR H.A.R.D. CORPS. THE TEAM MUST BE MOTIVATED.
IF YOU'RE NOT... WELL, I HATE TO LOSE YOU, BUT I SUPPOSE BLOODSHOT CAN--

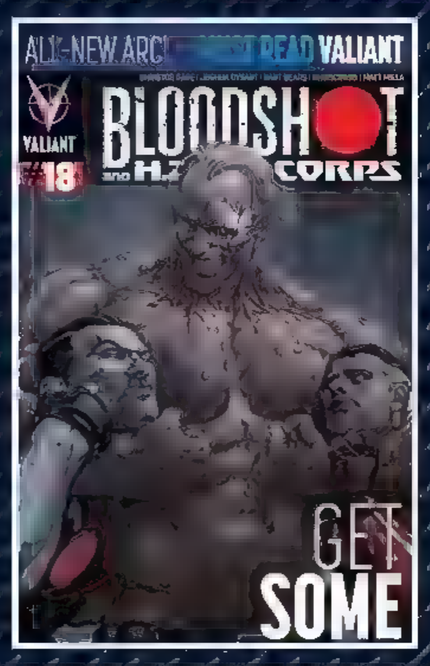
I DIDN'T HAVE A REASON BEFORE.
NOW I DO.
SUPERSTAR


TO MAKE IT ALL MEAN SOMETHING.
SUPERSTA

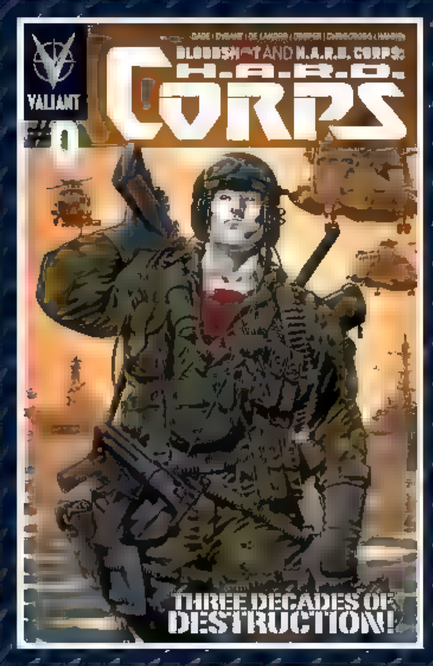
ADMIRABLE.
I KNOW YOU'LL SUCCEED.

ME TOO.
IF IT KILLS ME.
MANIAC

GET SOME!


VALIANT
BLOODSHOT
CORPS
GET
SOME

VALIANT
BLOODSHOT
GET
SOME


VALIANT
CORPS
THREE DECADES OF
DESTRUCTION!

ALL-NEW ARC!

MUST READ VALIANT

RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

OIL THEFT IS SADLY COMMON, MR. KOZOL. THE LOCALS CALL IT "BUNKERING." THEY CUT INTO THE PIPELINE, ATTACH SPIGOTS, AND STEAL ALL THEY CAN.

MY MEN HAVE DISCOVERED WHERE THE RINGLEADERS ARE HIDING. WE WILL ESCORT YOU THERE.

YOU'VE BEEN MOST ACCOMMODATING, GOVERNOR.

BUT THIS WILL NOT BE BUSINESS AS USUAL. YOU CAN'T GET THE HEAT OFF BY MURDERING SOME DIRT-POOR LOCALS WHOSE THEFTS ARE A DROP IN THE BUCKET.

THE REAL DAMAGE IS DONE BY ORGANIZED CRIME RINGS. WHO PAY KICKBACKS TO LOCAL OFFICIALS, LIKE YOU. AND *ARMOUR OIL* IS SICK OF IT.

SICK ENOUGH THAT THEY HIRED PROJECT RISING SPIRIT.

THEY DON'T MIND A LITTLE SKIMMING. BUT YOU'VE GOTTEN TOO GREEDY. YOU AND YOUR COHORTS HAVE TO GO.

UNLESS WE CAN NEGOTIATE A MUTUALLY AGREEABLE SETTLEMENT.

THAT'S WHAT I DO BEST.

SHALL WE TALK?

NO, I DON'T THINK SO.

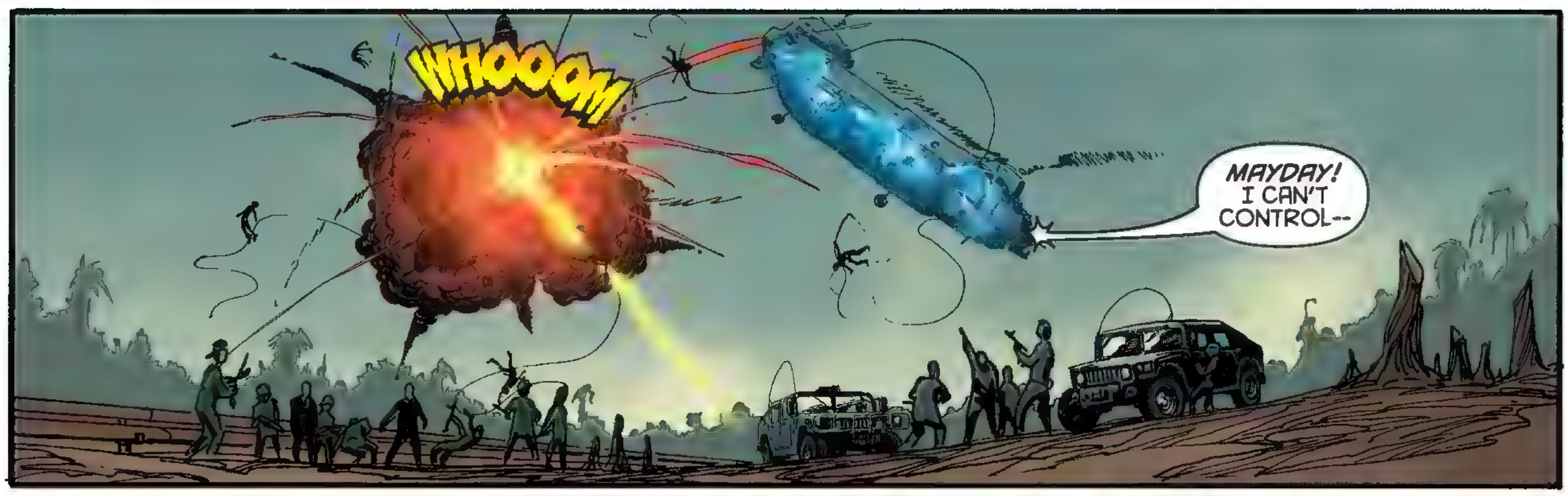
GUH--

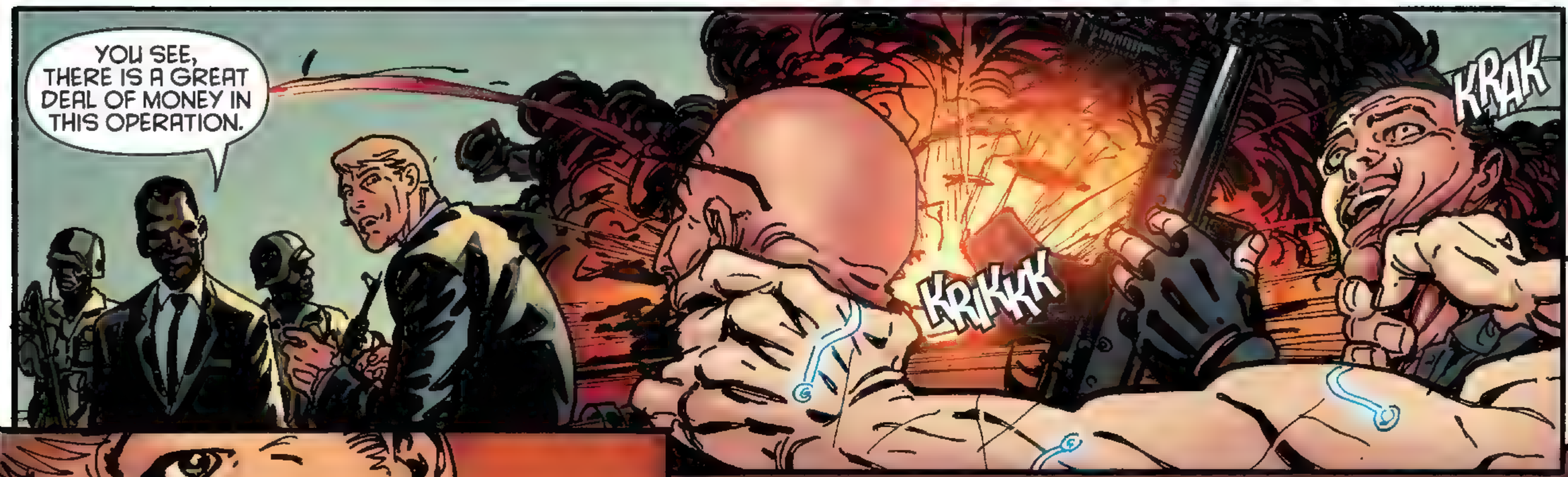
AKK--

PHUT

PHUT

PHUT

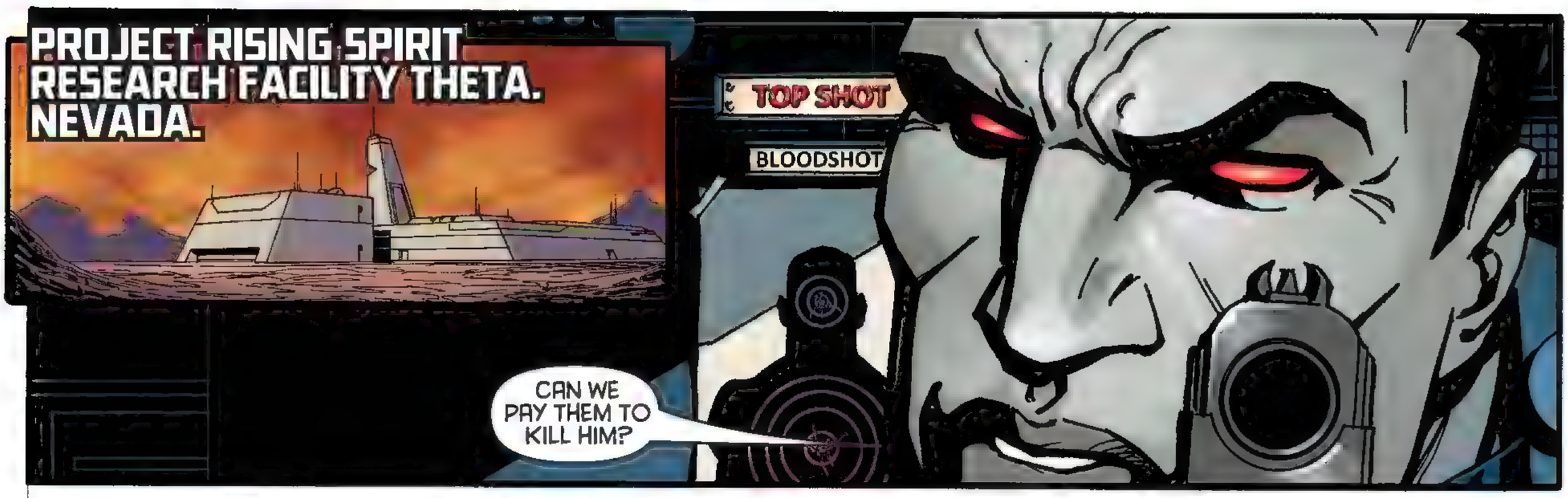

WHOOOM
MAYDAY! I CAN'T CONTROL--

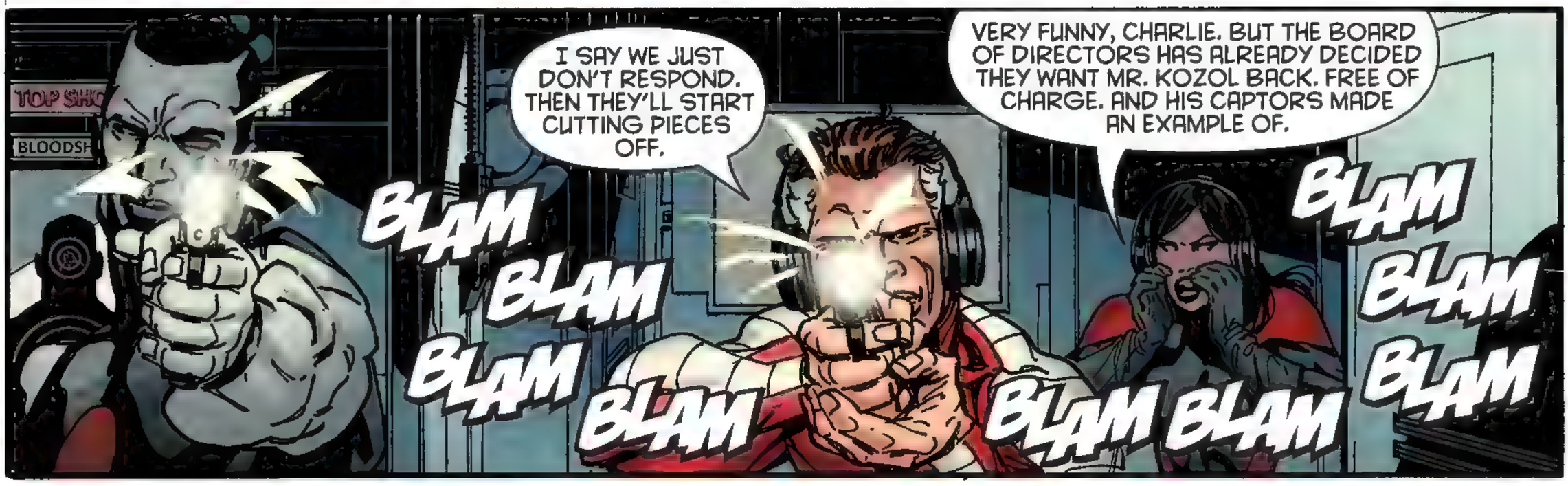

YOU SEE, THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY IN THIS OPERATION.
KRIKKK
KRAK

ENOUGH TO HIRE OUR OWN "SECURITY CONSULTANTS."

MY GOD... SIMON ORECK?
MORRIS. GOT A LITTLE TOO COMFORTABLE IN MY OLD JOB, HAVEN'T YOU?

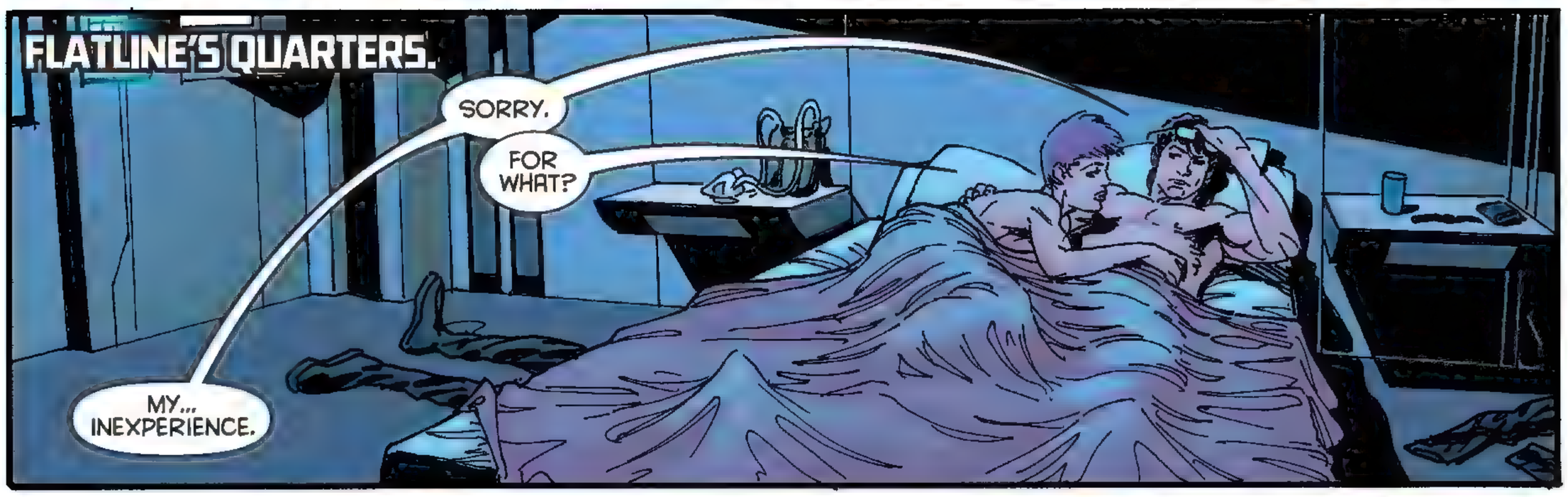
NOW. LET US DISCUSS AN APPROPRIATE RANSOM FOR THE C.E.O. OF PROJECT RISING SPIRIT.

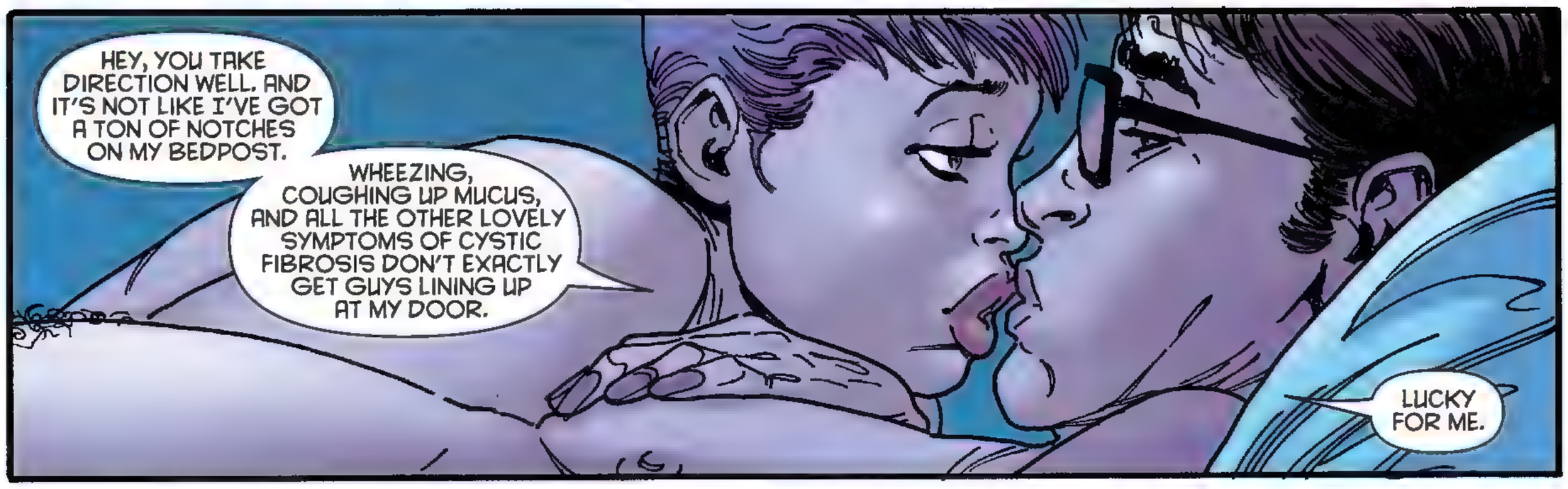

PROJECT RISING SPIRIT RESEARCH FACILITY THETA. NEVADA.
TOP SHOT
BLOODSHOT
CAN WE PAY THEM TO KILL HIM?

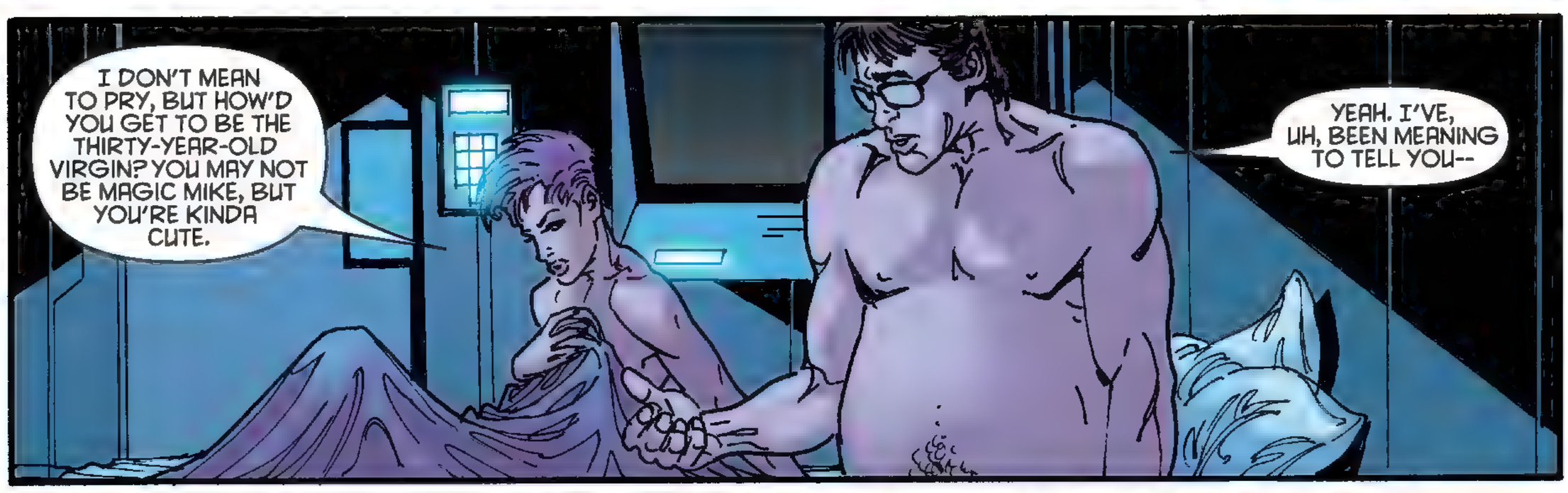

I SAY WE JUST DON'T RESPOND. THEN THEY'LL START CUTTING PIECES OFF.
VERY FUNNY, CHARLIE. BUT THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS HAS ALREADY DECIDED THEY WANT MR. KOZOL BACK. FREE OF CHARGE. AND HIS CAPTORS MADE AN EXAMPLE OF.
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM

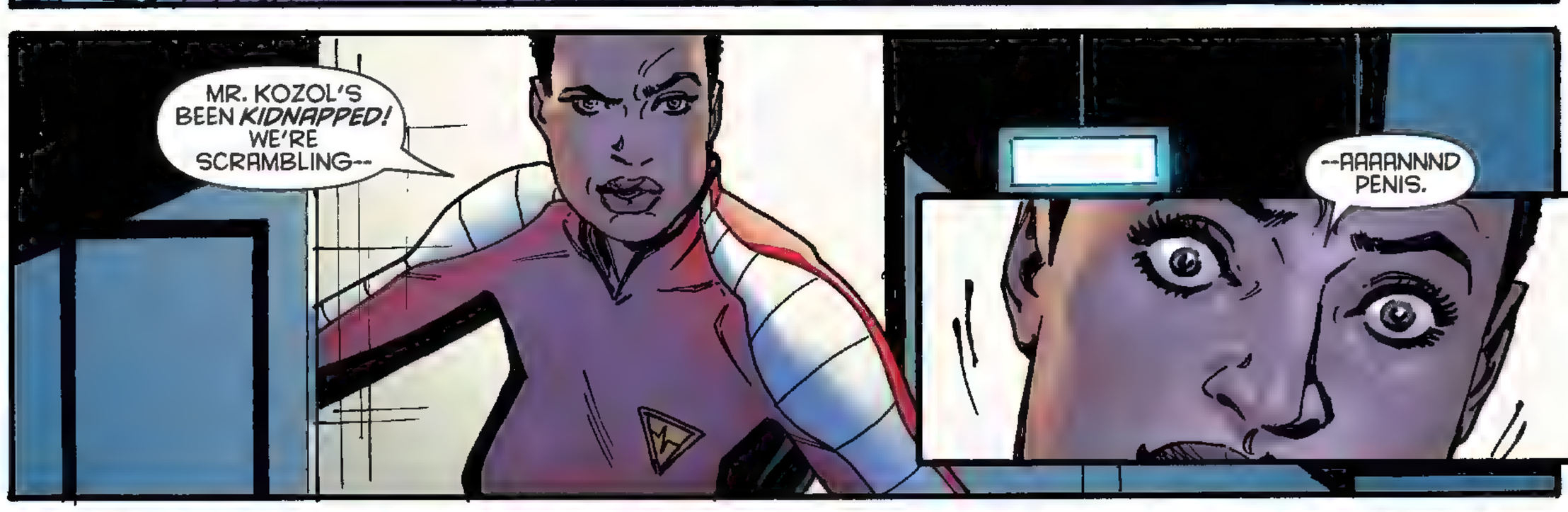
SO SEND IN SOME GRUNTS. COME ON, CAROL, I'M NOT RISKING MY PEOPLE'S LIVES FOR THAT SMARMY, NARCISSISTIC--
HIS GUARDS' COMMS WERE LINKED TO BASE. BEFORE THEY CUT OUT, WE PICKED UP A FAMILIAR VOICE. ONE YOU BOTH HAVE HISTORY WITH. ESPECIALLY *YOU*, BLOODSHOT.

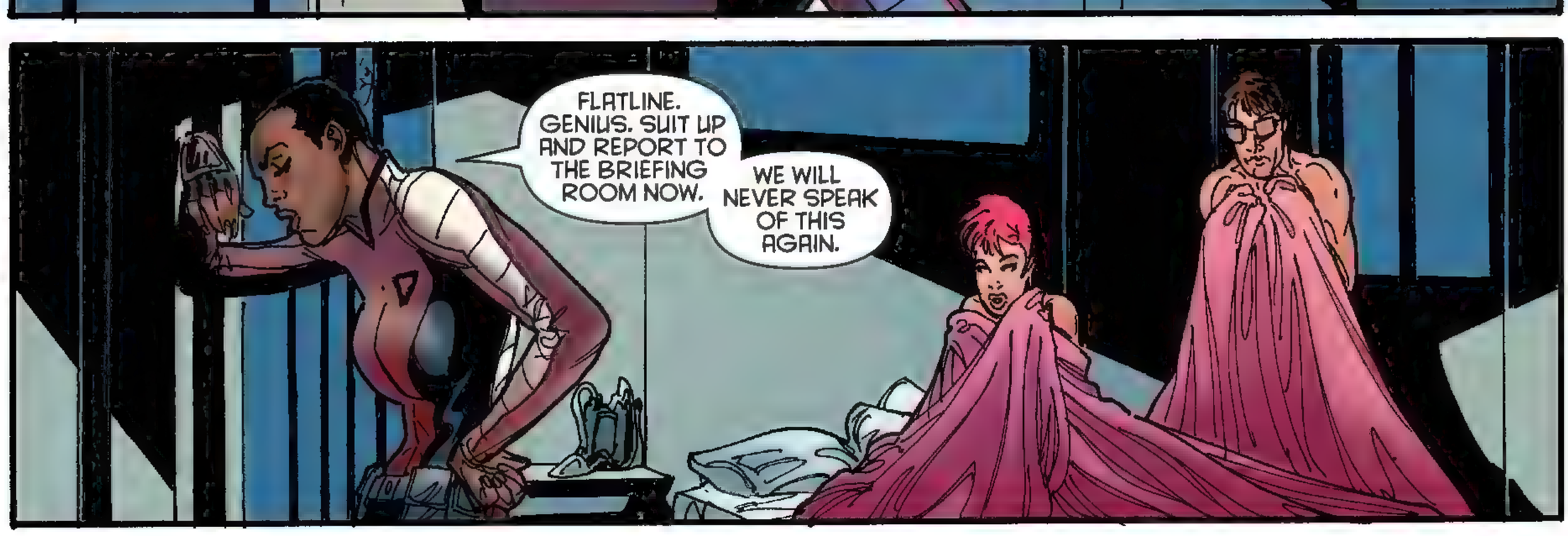
SIMON ORECK.

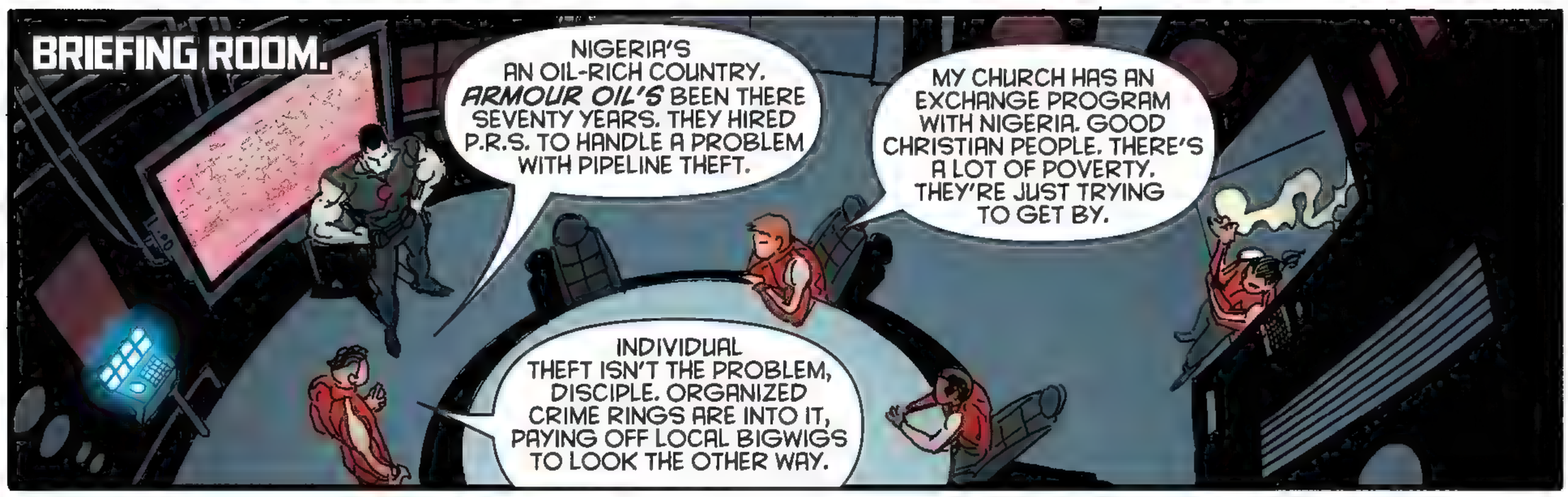

FLATLINE'S QUARTERS.
SORRY.
FOR WHAT?
MY... INEXPERIENCE.

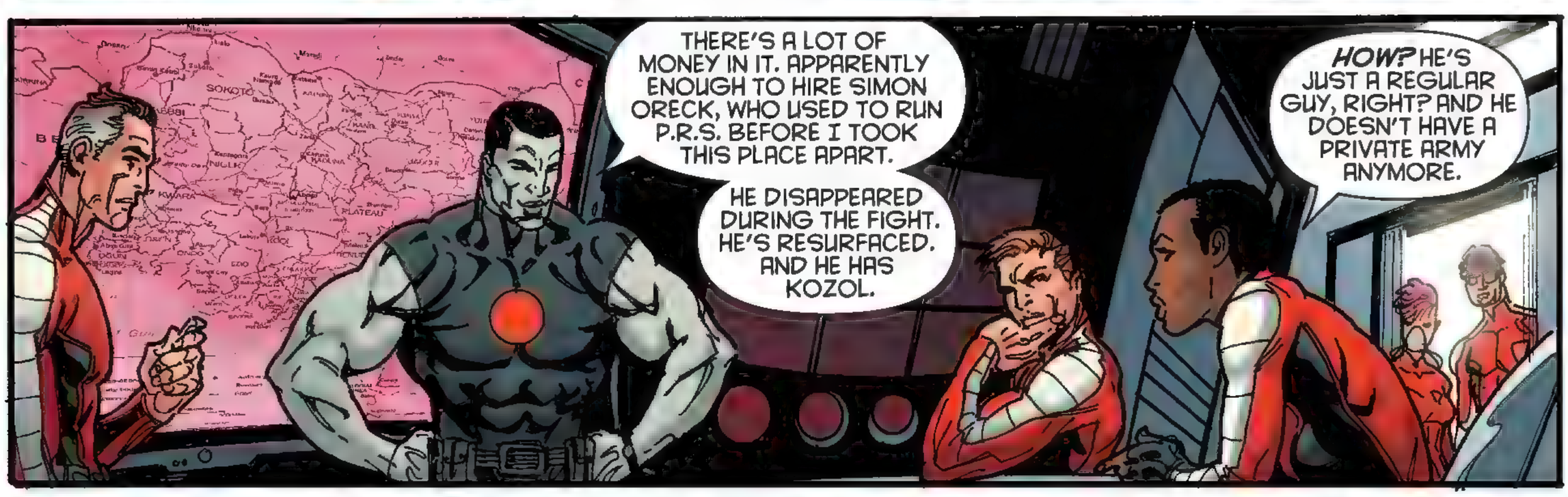

HEY, YOU TAKE DIRECTION WELL. AND IT'S NOT LIKE I'VE GOT A TON OF NOTCHES ON MY BEDPOST.
WHEEZING, COUGHING UP MUCUS, AND ALL THE OTHER LOVELY SYMPTOMS OF CYSTIC FIBROSIS DON'T EXACTLY GET GUYS LINING UP AT MY DOOR.
LUCKY FOR ME.


I DON'T MEAN TO PRY, BUT HOW'D YOU GET TO BE THE THIRTY-YEAR-OLD VIRGIN? YOU MAY NOT BE MAGIC MIKE, BUT YOU'RE KINDA CUTE.
YEAH. I'VE, UH, BEEN MEANING TO TELL YOU--


MR. KOZOL'S BEEN *KIDNAPPED!* WE'RE SCRAMBLING--
--AAAANNND PENIS.

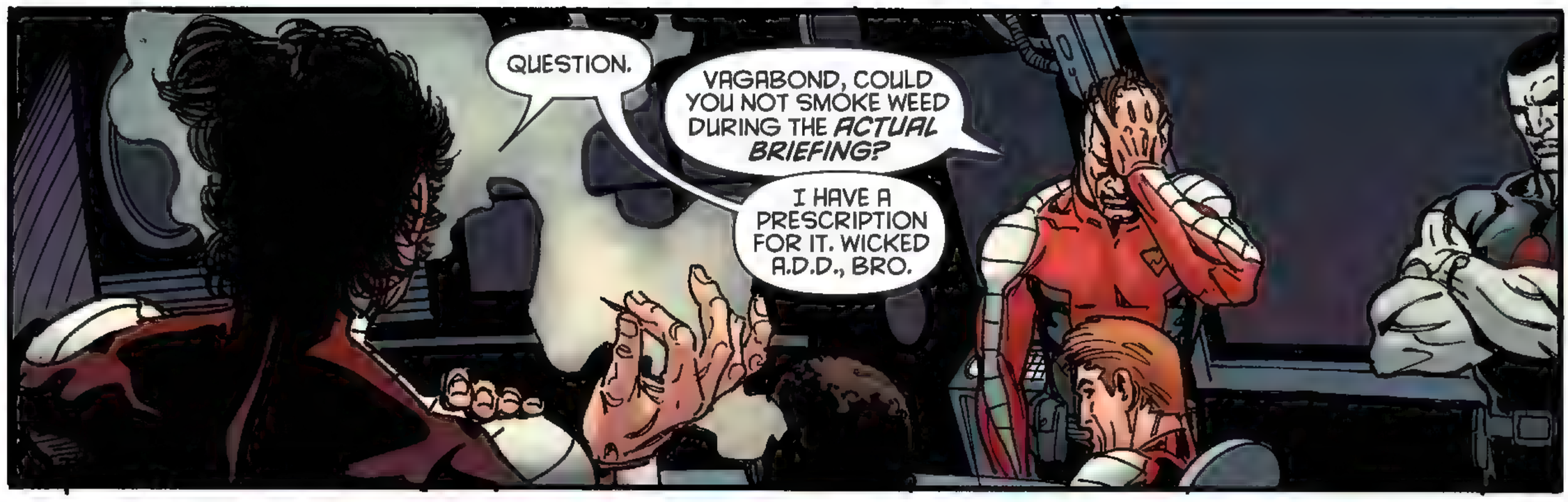

FLATLINE. GENIUS. SUIT UP AND REPORT TO THE BRIEFING ROOM NOW.
WE WILL NEVER SPEAK OF THIS AGAIN.


BRIEFING ROOM.
NIGERIA'S AN OIL-RICH COUNTRY. ARMOUR OIL'S BEEN THERE SEVENTY YEARS. THEY HIRED P.R.S. TO HANDLE A PROBLEM WITH PIPELINE THEFT.
MY CHURCH HAS AN EXCHANGE PROGRAM WITH NIGERIA. GOOD CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. THERE'S A LOT OF POVERTY. THEY'RE JUST TRYING TO GET BY.
INDIVIDUAL THEFT ISN'T THE PROBLEM, DISCIPLE. ORGANIZED CRIME RINGS ARE INTO IT, PAYING OFF LOCAL BIGWIGS TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY.


THERE'S A LOT OF MONEY IN IT. APPARENTLY ENOUGH TO HIRE SIMON ORECK, WHO USED TO RUN P.R.S. BEFORE I TOOK THIS PLACE APART.
HE DISAPPEARED DURING THE FIGHT. HE'S RESURFACED. AND HE HAS KOZOL.
HOW? HE'S JUST A REGULAR GUY, RIGHT? AND HE DOESN'T HAVE A PRIVATE ARMY ANYMORE.

ORECK HELD POWER FOR A LONG TIME. HE'S THE ONE WHO SHUT DOWN H.A.R.D. CORPS IN THE '90s AND FOCUSED ON ACQUIRING PSIOTS INSTEAD.
HE PREFERRED THEIR NATURAL MENTAL POWERS TO THE ARTIFICIAL ONES WE DOWNLOAD THROUGH OUR IMPLANTS. AND THEIR NORMAL LIFESPANS TO OUR...YOU KNOW.
HE CONTROLLED THEM WITH BOMBS IMPLANTED IN THEIR HEADS. BUT SOME LIKED THEIR WORK. LIKE GAMMA, THE CRAZY OLD SADIST WHO POLICED THE NURSERY.
WE'VE FOUND EVIDENCE ORECK FUNNELED SELECT PSIOTS INTO A SECRET, OFF-THE-BOOKS BLACK OPS UNIT. ANSWERABLE ONLY TO HIM.

THIS IS BIG BOY. HIS BRAIN GENERATES POLYPEPTIDES, AMINO ACIDS, AND OTHER GROWTH HORMONES. BUILDS MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF MUSCLE.
I REMEMBER HIM AS A ROID-RAGED LUNATIC KEPT ALIVE BY INSULIN PUMPS AND CYBERTECH, WITHOUT WHICH HE'D DIE OF CANCER, DIABETES, OR BEING RIPPED APART BY HIS OWN BODY.
HE WAS REPORTED LOST IN THE FIELD YEARS AGO. BUT HE FITS WITNESS DESCRIPTIONS FROM NIGERIA. WHO KNOWS HOW MANY OTHERS LIKE HIM ORECK HAS?
THIS IS WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST, PEOPLE. BE READY FOR ANYTHING.
I'VE ARRANGED SOME POWER SEQUENCES THAT CAN BE DOWNLOADED WITH A SINGLE COMMAND. STUDY THEM. KNOW WHEN TO USE THEM. YOU HESITATE, YOU'RE DEAD.

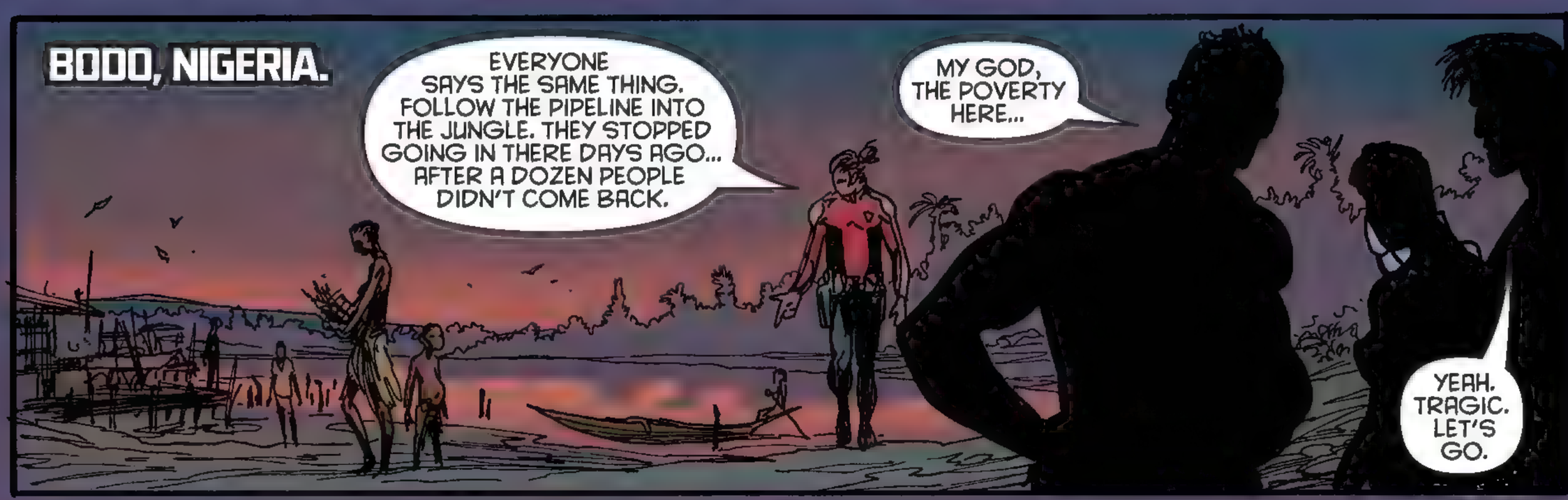

QUESTION.
VAGABOND, COULD YOU NOT SMOKE WEED DURING THE *ACTUAL BRIEFING?*
I HAVE A PRESCRIPTION FOR IT. WICKED A.D.D., BRO.

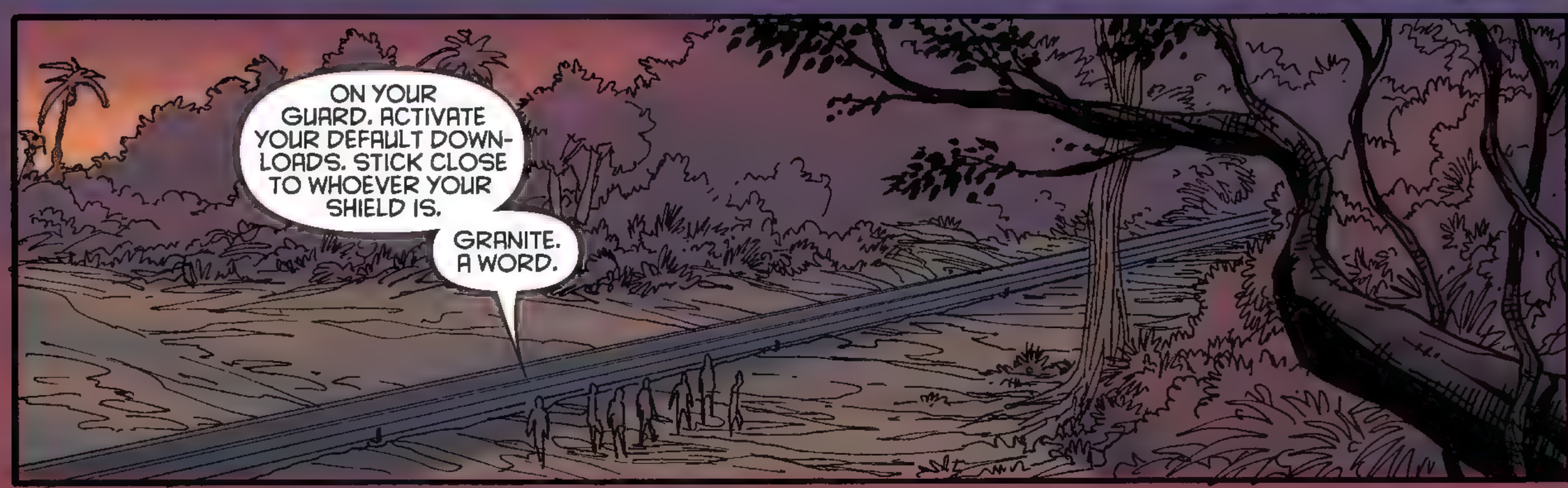
BLOODSHOT, I CAN TELL YOU HATE THIS ORECK DUDE. I GUESS 'CAUSE HE FORCED YOU TO BE P.R.S.'S LIVING WEAPON.
HOW THE HELL IS THAT ANY DIFFERENT THAN WHAT YOU ARE NOW?

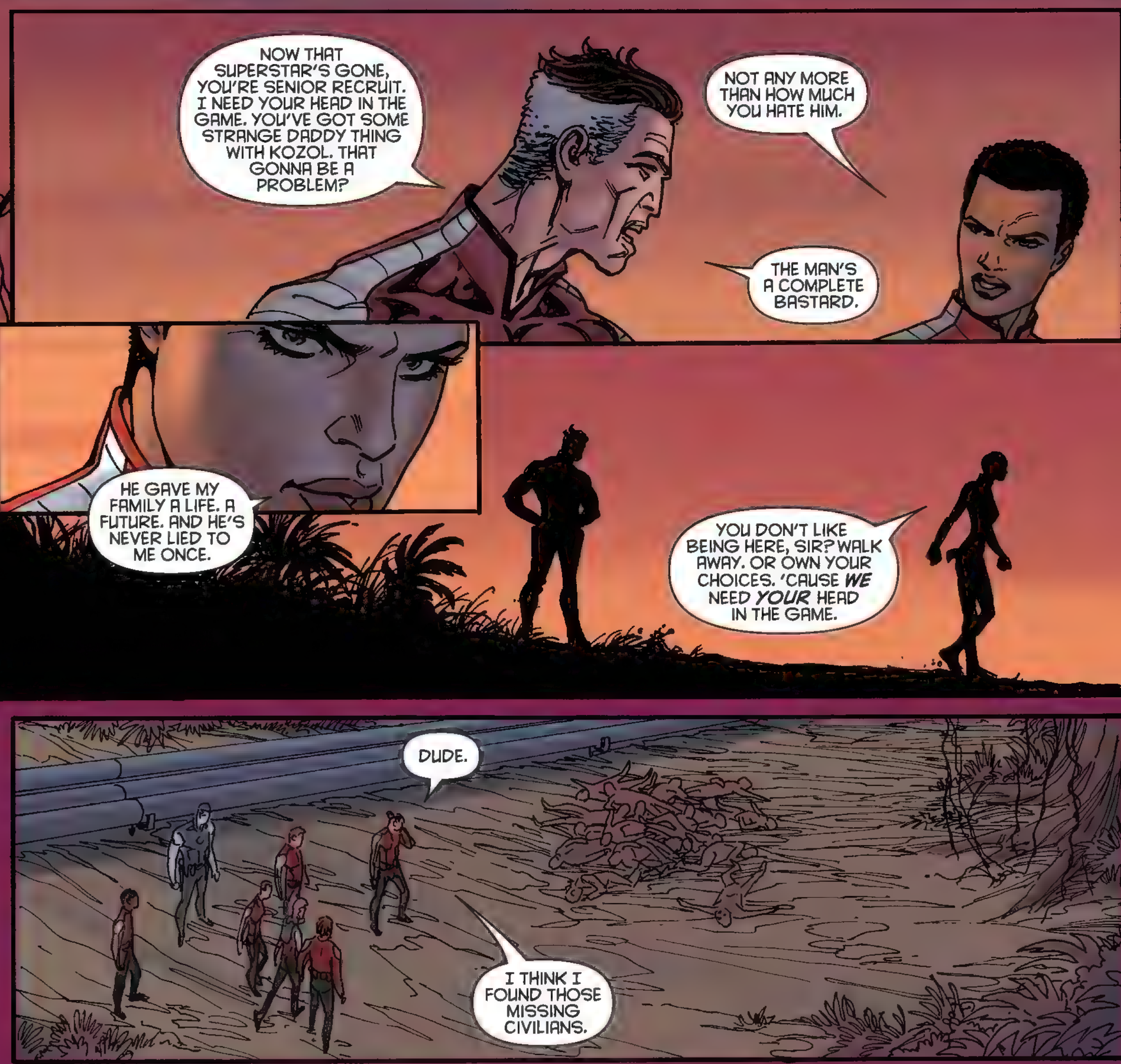
WHAT? I CAN'T BE THE ONLY ONE THINKING IT.

ORECK *BRAINWASHED* ME. USED FAKE MEMORIES TO MOTIVATE ME. STOLE MY FREEDOM TO *THINK FOR MYSELF.*
KOZOL'S A SCUMBAG TO MY *FACE.* I MAKE MY OWN CHOICES NOW.
AND THAT'S THE *LAST* TIME YOU GET TO ASK ME ABOUT MY PERSONAL BUSINESS.

NOW MOVE. WE'RE WHEELS UP IN TEN.


BODO, NIGERIA.
EVERYONE SAYS THE SAME THING. FOLLOW THE PIPELINE INTO THE JUNGLE. THEY STOPPED GOING IN THERE DAYS AGO... AFTER A DOZEN PEOPLE DIDN'T COME BACK.
MY GOD, THE POVERTY HERE...
YEAH. TRAGIC. LET'S GO.

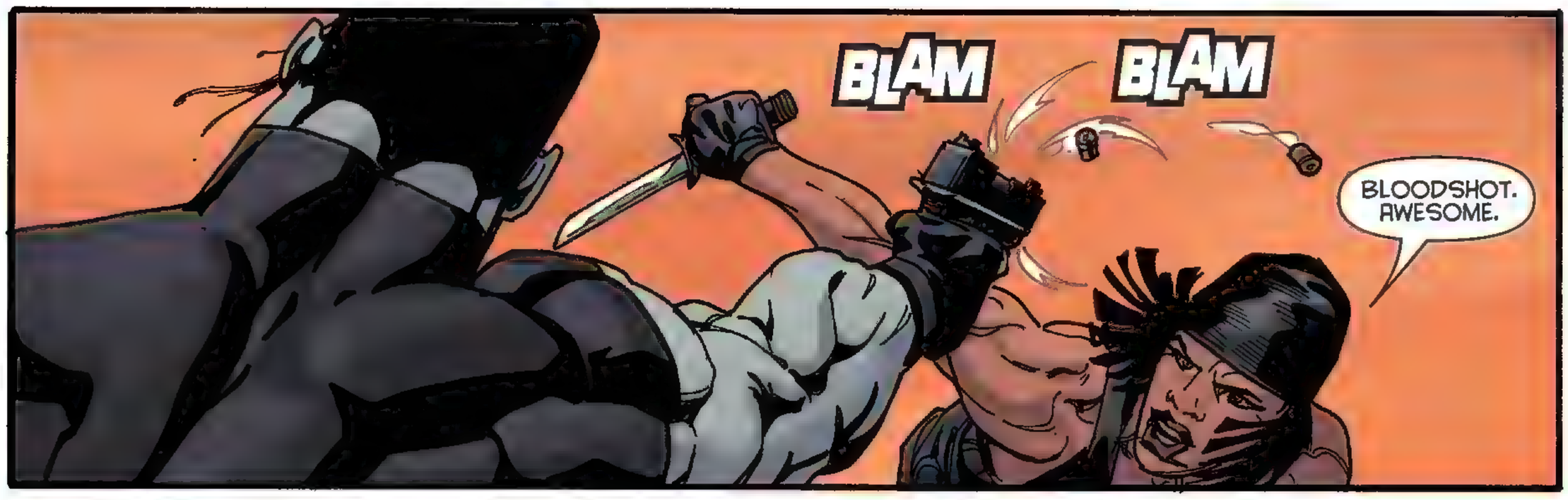

ON YOUR GUARD. ACTIVATE YOUR DEFAULT DOWN-LOADS. STICK CLOSE TO WHOEVER YOUR SHIELD IS.
GRANITE. A WORD.


NOW THAT SUPERSTAR'S GONE, YOU'RE SENIOR RECRUIT. I NEED YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME. YOU'VE GOT SOME STRANGE DADDY THING WITH KOZOL. THAT GONNA BE A PROBLEM?
NOT ANY MORE THAN HOW MUCH YOU HATE HIM.
THE MAN'S A COMPLETE BASTARD.
HE GAVE MY FAMILY A LIFE. A FUTURE. AND HE'S NEVER LIED TO ME ONCE.
YOU DON'T LIKE BEING HERE, SIR? WALK AWAY. OR OWN YOUR CHOICES. 'CAUSE *WE* NEED *YOUR* HEAD IN THE GAME.

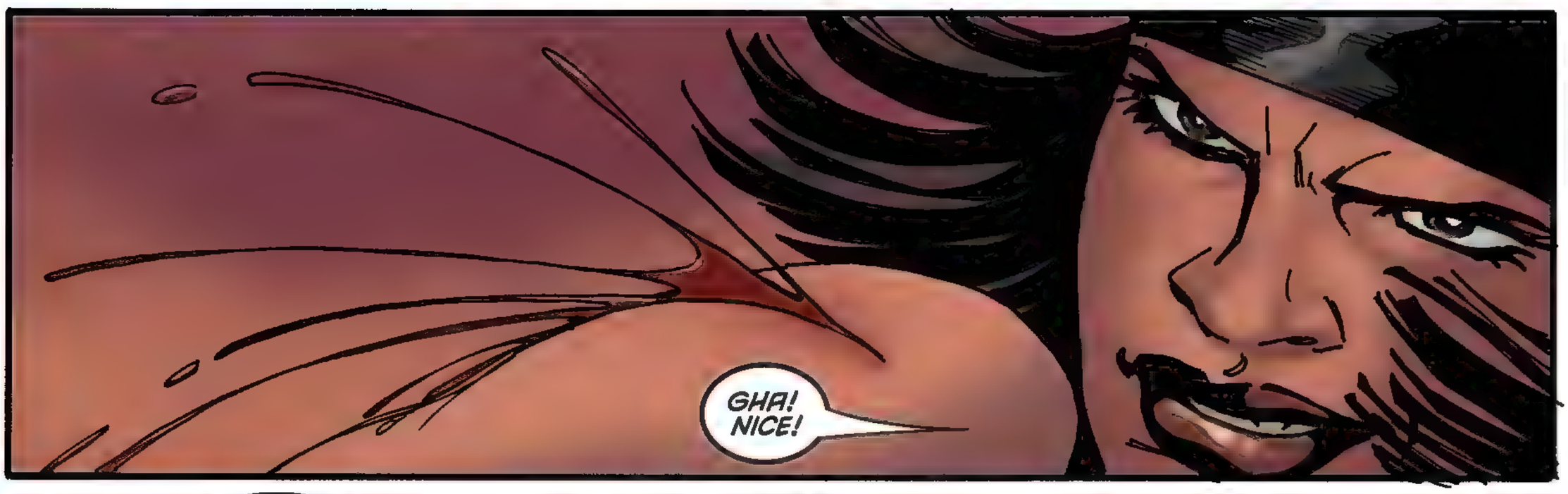
DUDE.
I THINK I FOUND THOSE MISSING CIVILIANS.

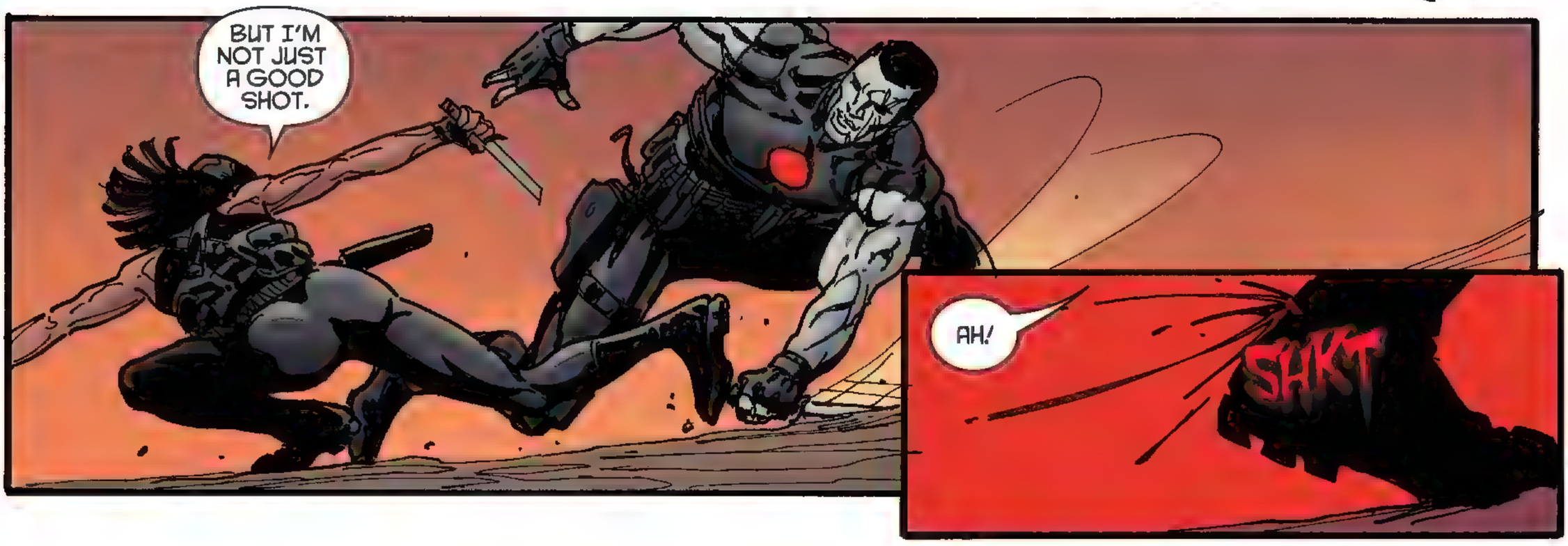
THESE POOR PEOPLE...
DAMN, LOOK AT THIS ONE. WHAT DID THEY DO TO HIM?
VAGABOND, WAIT!
IT'S WHAT I'LL DO TO YOU.
BACK!
SHHRRRAZZ
SPTCH
SPTCH
AGH!
SLOPPY. WALKED RIGHT INTO A KILL ZONE.
THEY'RE ROOKIES. BLAME THEIR LEADERS.
KNCH
W-WHAT ARE THEY?

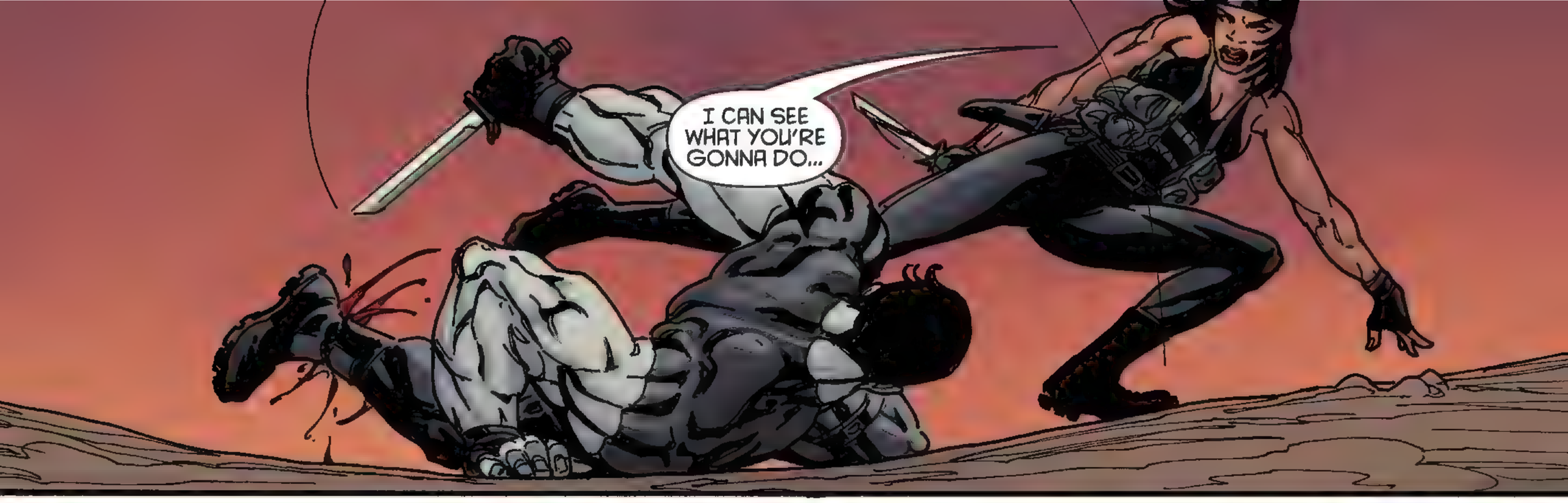
WE'RE THE SPECIALISTS.
WE'RE WHAT YOU COULD BE ONE DAY. IF YOU'D LIVED.
CODENAME: COLDWAR. PSIONIC MANIPULATION OF COLD/HEAT.
CODENAME: CHERNOBYL. PSIONICALLY MANIPULATES RADIATION.
CODENAME: BIG BOY. BRAIN STIMULATES ADRENALIZED HORMONAL MUSCLE GROWTH.
CODENAME: SHARPSHOOTER. VISUAL HYPER-ACUITY LINKED TO HEIGHTENED MENTAL PROCESSING POWER.

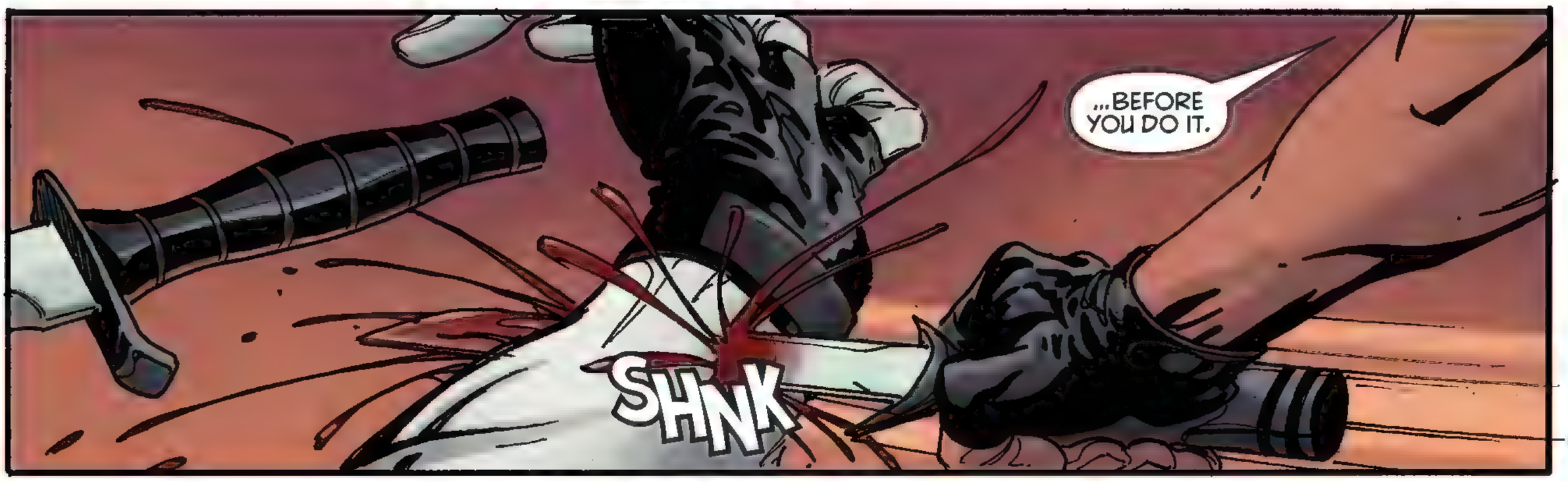

BLAM
BLAM
BLOODSHOT. AWESOME.

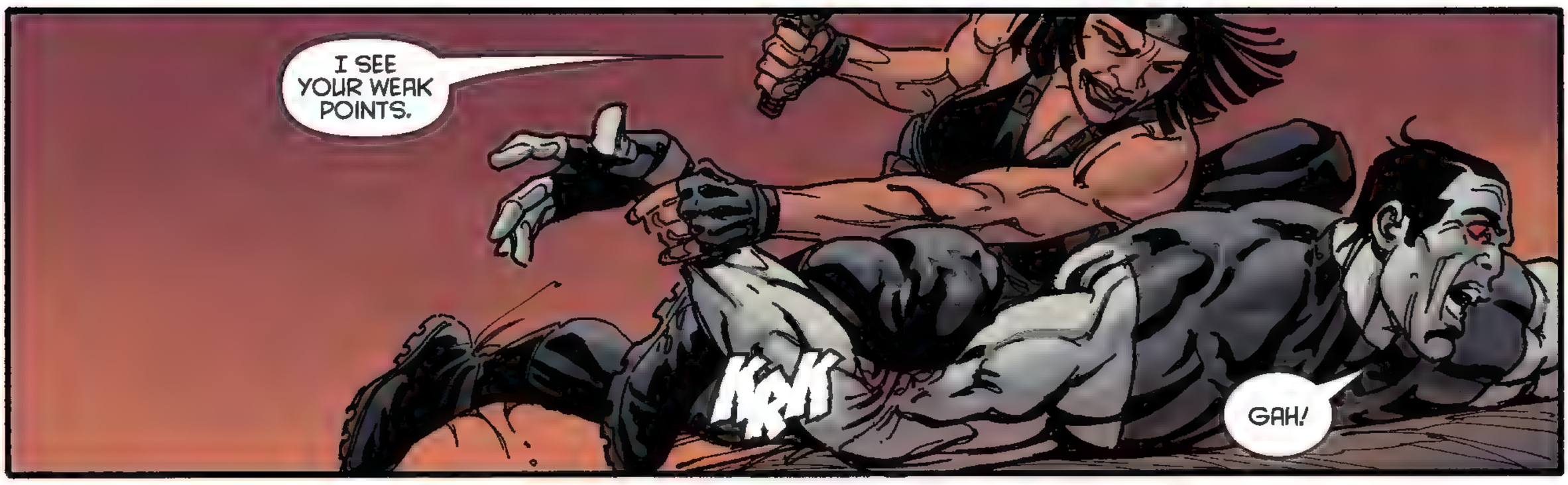
ALWAYS WANTED TO FIGHT YOU.
BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.


GHA! NICE!


BUT I'M NOT JUST A GOOD SHOT.
AH!
SHKT


I CAN SEE WHAT YOU'RE GONNA DO...

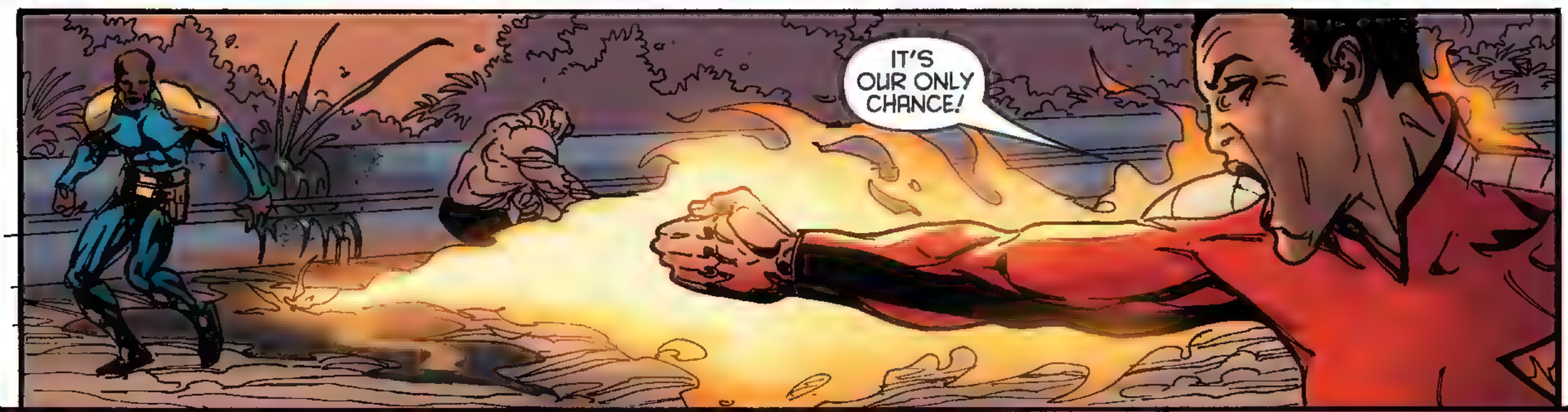

...BEFORE YOU DO IT.
SHNK


I SEE YOUR WEAK POINTS.
KRK
GAH!

YOU HEAL FAST.

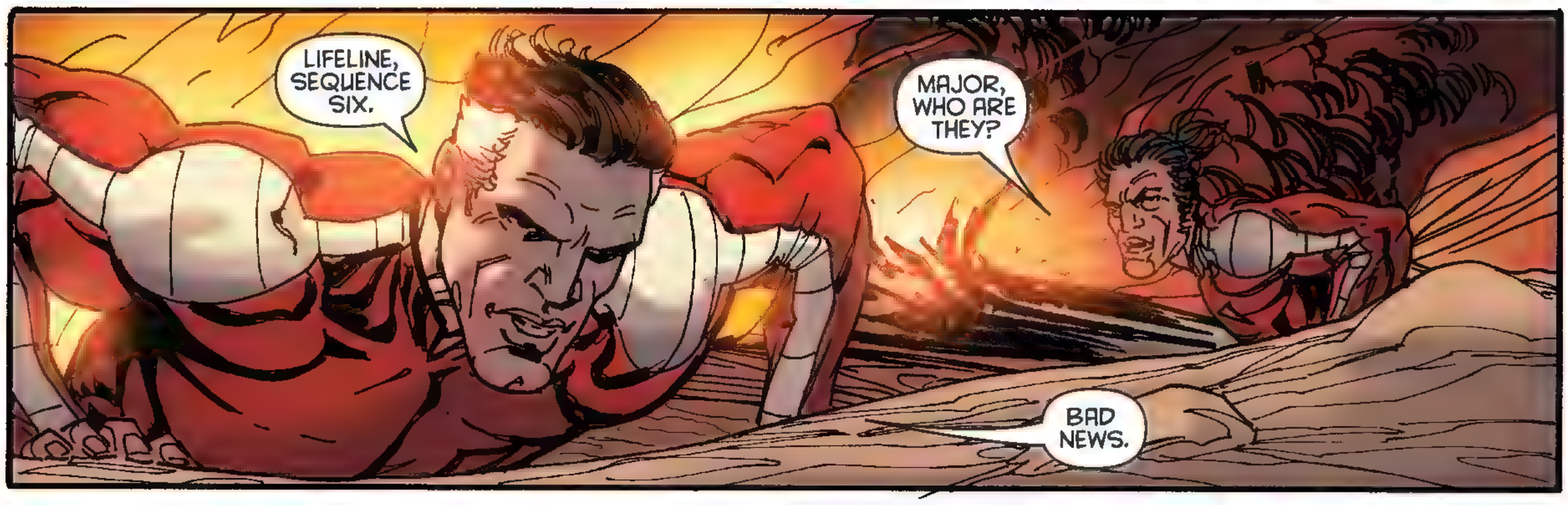
I CUT FASTER.

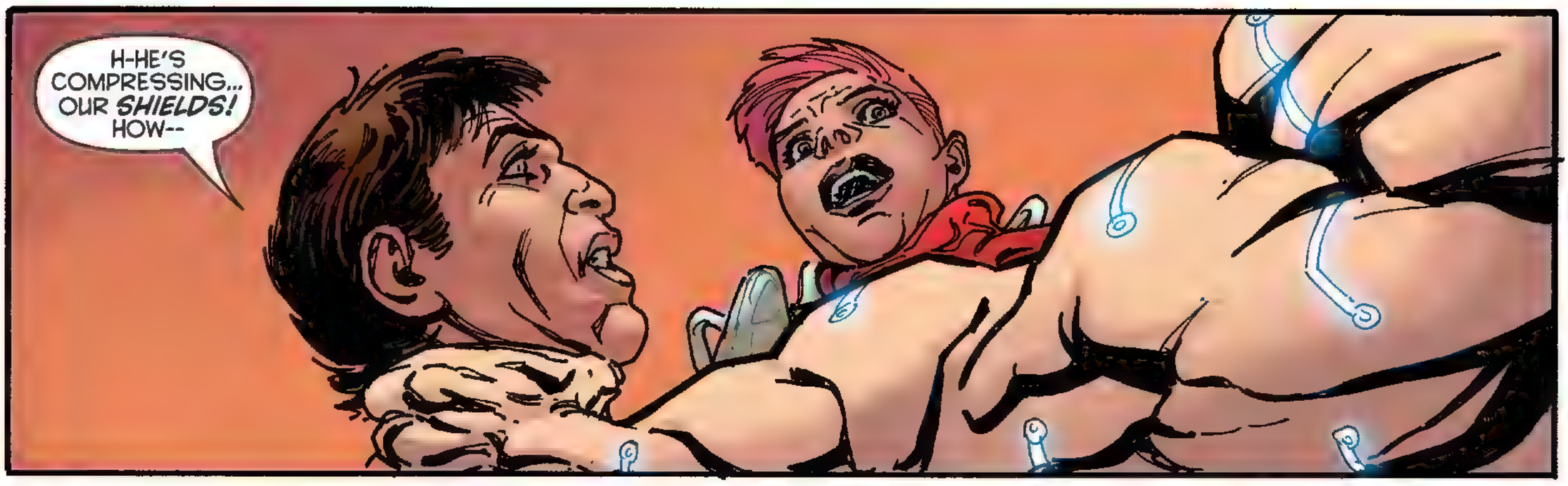
GRANITE, STOP! YOU'LL--
I KNOW!

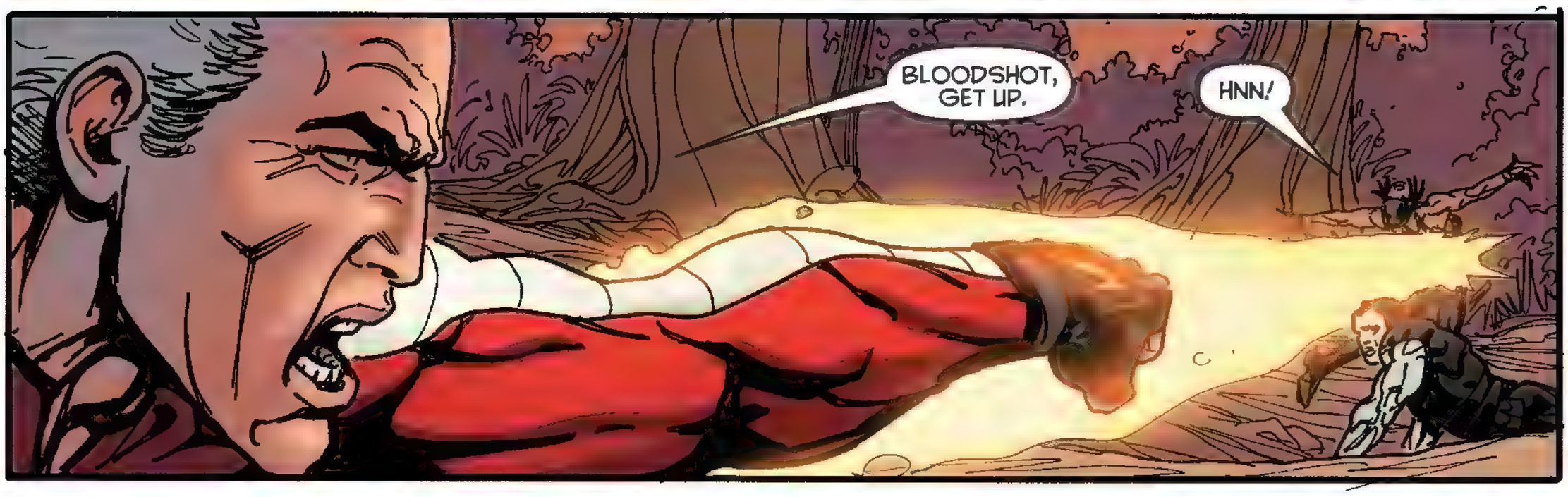

IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!

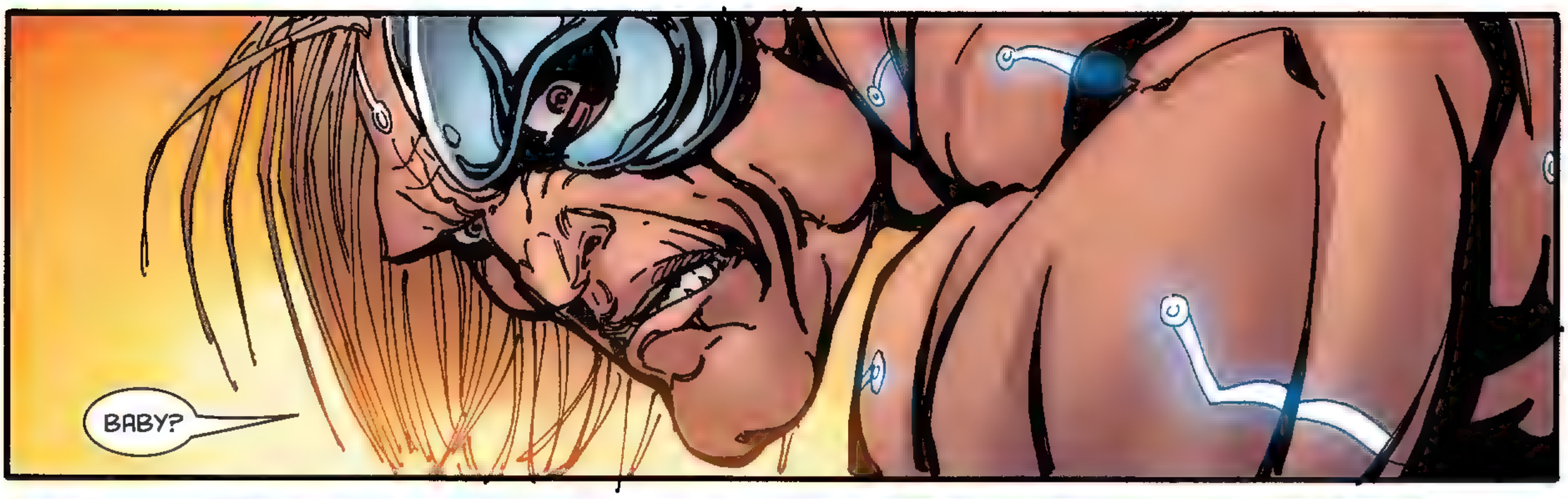
BUHWHOOOOOOOM
I LIKE THESE KIDS. THEY GOT STONES.
YEAH. ALMOST A SHAME TO KILL 'EM.
ALMOST.

LIFELINE, STUN RAM!
WHUFF!
NEURAL SPIKE!
REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
NNAA!
REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
EEEEEEEEEE
PUNK... KIDS.
YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE OF US! THE WORLD'S HERE BECAUSE OF US!
AND THIS IS THE THANKS WE GET?
LIFELINE! GIVE US BOTH SHIELDS, NOW!
AWW. YOU TWO ARE IN LOVE, AREN'T YOU? I CAN TELL. I'M A ROMANTIC. ME AND MY LADY BEEN TOGETHER MORE'N TWENTY YEARS.
TELL YOU WHAT. I'LL KILL YOU TOGETHER.

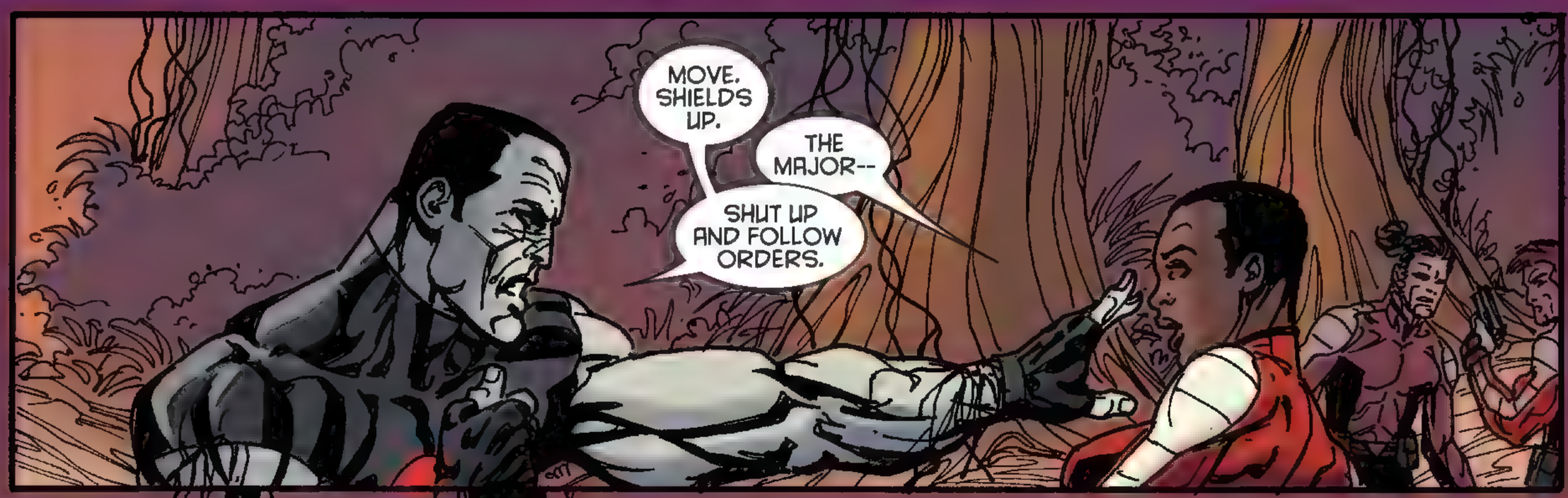

LIFELINE, SEQUENCE SIX.
MAJOR, WHO ARE THEY?
BAD NEWS.


H-HE'S COMPRESSING... OUR *SHIELDS!* HOW--


BLOODSHOT, GET UP.
HNN!

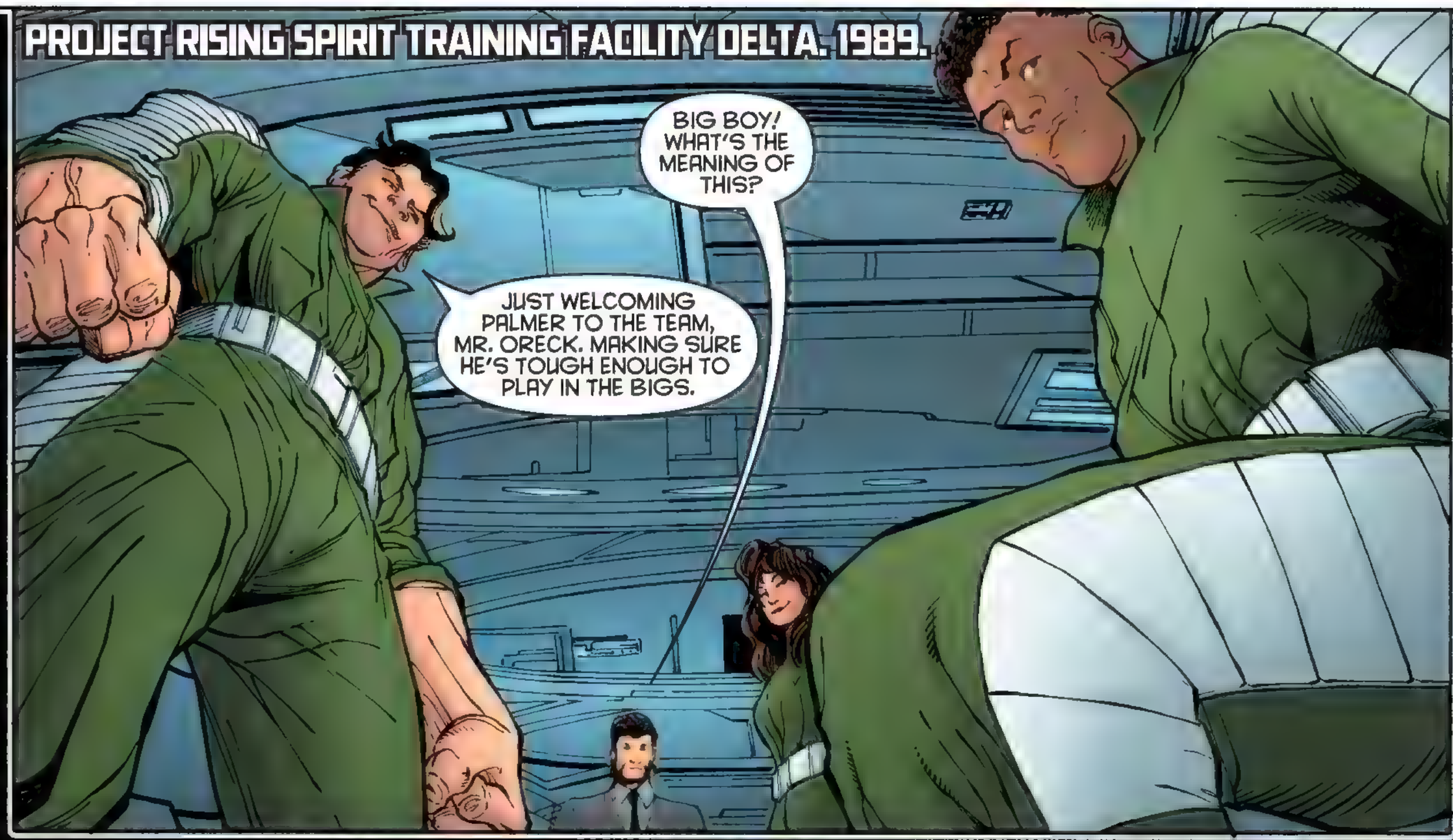

BABY?

GET 'EM OUT OF HERE. NOW.
NOW!


MOVE. SHIELDS UP.
THE MAJOR--
SHUT UP AND FOLLOW ORDERS.

BWHOOM
WE STAY, WE ALL DIE.

RRRAAAA!
OH, HELL.
LIFELINE, SHIELDS!
BRINNGCH
UK!
DON'T KILL HIM, BIG BOY. I WANT TO CHAT WITH THE MAJOR.
WE HAVE A LOT OF CATCHING UP TO DO...


PROJECT RISING SPIRIT TRAINING FACILITY DELTA. 1989.
BIG BOY! WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?
JUST WELCOMING PALMER TO THE TEAM, MR. ORECK. MAKING SURE HE'S TOUGH ENOUGH TO PLAY IN THE BIGS.

AND I APPRECIATE IT.
LIFELINE. SEQUENCE TWO.
NOW LET'S MAKE SURE YOU'RE SMART ENOUGH.

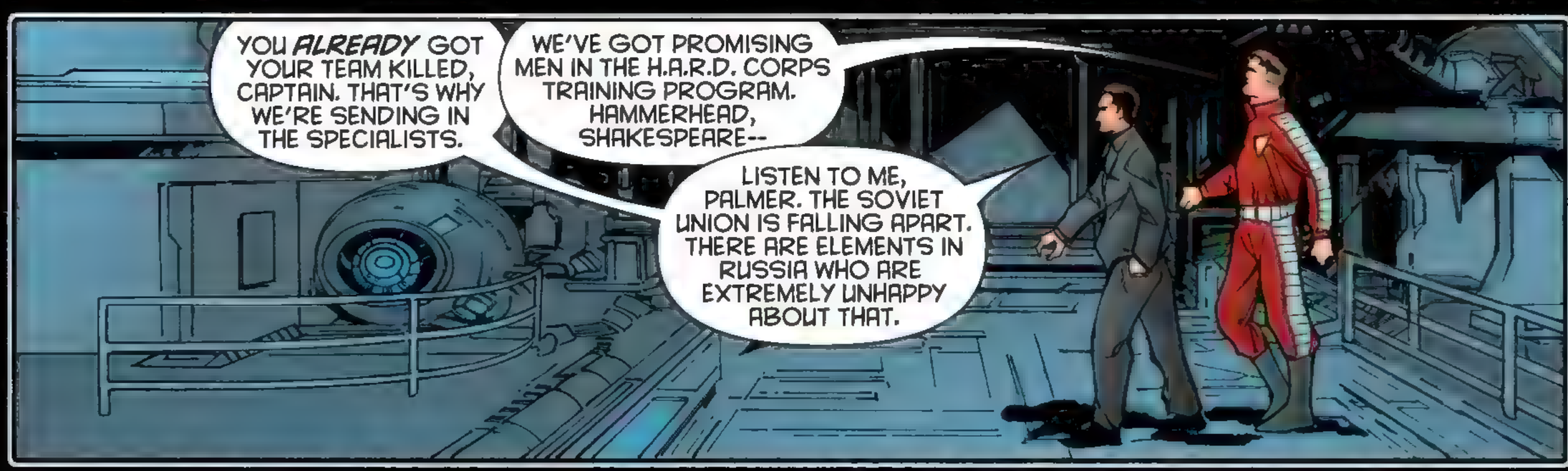
WHFF!
SPREAD OUT MORE. BUNCHED UP LIKE THAT, YOU'RE SITTING DUCKS.
AND IT'S CAPTAIN PALMER TO YOU.

SON OF A--
THAT'S ENOUGH, COLDWAR.

I'M SUPPOSED TO TAKE THAT KINDA--
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO DO WHAT I SAY. NOW STAND DOWN.

I CAN'T HAVE THIS IF YOU'RE GOING TO WORK TOGETHER. NOW SHAKE HANDS. SAVE IT FOR THE ENEMY.
NO HARD FEELINGS.
WHATEVER.

SIR, THIS IS A BAD IDEA. BIG BOY'S CRAZY.
THE HORMONES THAT BUILD HIS MUSCLES ALSO AFFECT HIS MOOD. WE'RE WORKING ON CYBERNETICS TO MODULATE IT. YOU HAVE TO MAKE ALLOWANCES.
MAKING ALLOWANCES ON MISSIONS GETS YOU KILLED. IT GETS YOUR TEAM KILLED.


YOU ALREADY GOT YOUR TEAM KILLED, CAPTAIN. THAT'S WHY WE'RE SENDING IN THE SPECIALISTS.
WE'VE GOT PROMISING MEN IN THE H.A.R.D. CORPS TRAINING PROGRAM. HAMMERHEAD, SHAKESPEARE--
LISTEN TO ME, PALMER. THE SOVIET UNION IS FALLING APART. THERE ARE ELEMENTS IN RUSSIA WHO ARE EXTREMELY UNHAPPY ABOUT THAT.

Soviet Union Administrative Divisions, 1989
SOME HAVE ARMIES. AND WEAPONS. WHAT THEY DON'T HAVE IS NUKES... YET.
WE NEED HISTORY TO COME FASTER. THE WORLD DOES NOT HAVE TIME TO WAIT FOR YOUR "PROMISING TRAINEES."
THE SPECIALISTS HAVE BEEN GROOMED FOR THIS SINCE THEY WERE CHILDREN. THEY WERE BORN FOR IT.

I RESPECT YOUR LEADERSHIP AND EXPERIENCE. I WILL SEE TO IT THEY FOLLOW YOUR ORDERS. YOU WILL EVALUATE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS IN THE FIELD.
DO WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?
YES, SIR. I'LL...I'LL MAKE IT WORK.

"IT'LL BE FINE."

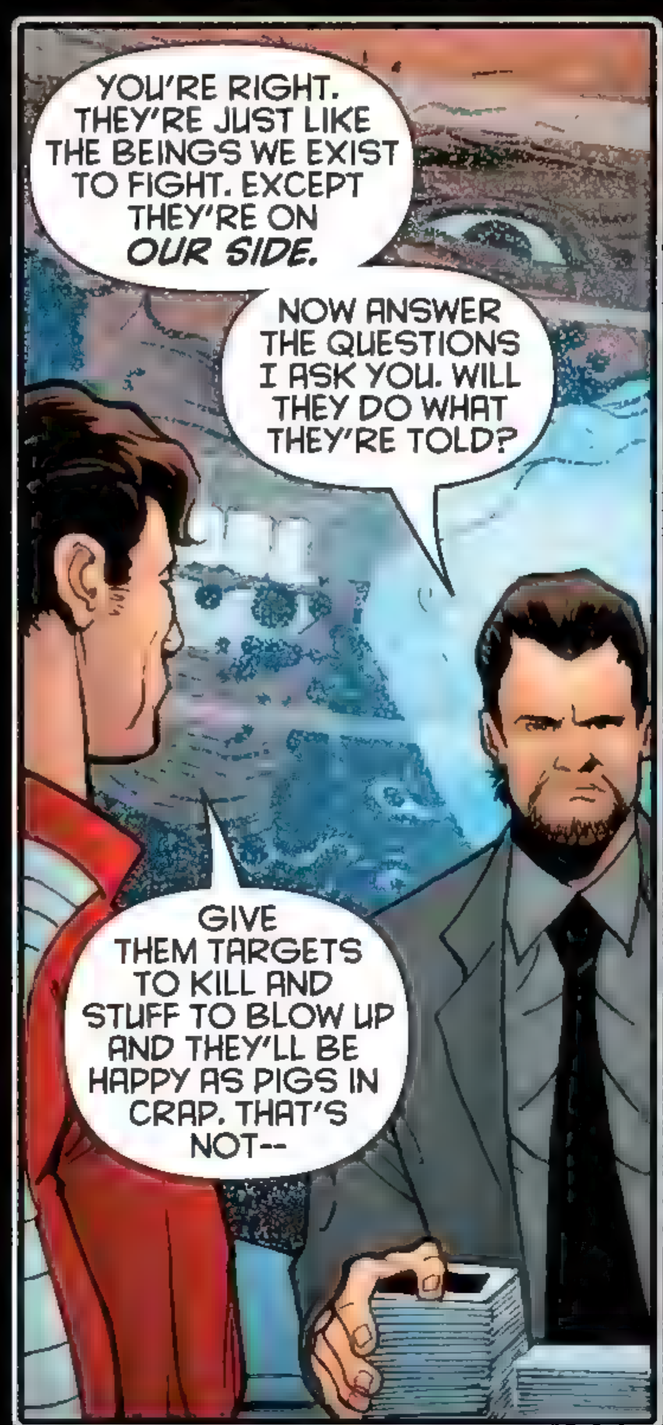
DID THEY EXECUTE THE MISSION? DID THEY FOLLOW ORDERS?
YES. THAT'S NOT THE POINT.
I THOUGHT IT WAS PRECISELY THE POINT.

LOOK AT THEM!
THOSE AREN'T SOLDIERS. THEY ENJOY KILLING. THEY REVEL IN USING THEIR POWERS.
PAUSE

AND YOU DON'T? PLEASE.
DO I LIKE FLYING, OR DEFLECTING BULLETS? SURE. I DON'T GET PLEASURE OUT OF KILLING PEOPLE.
ALSO: YOU CAN TURN MY POWERS OFF.

THEY HAVE IMPLANTS TOO. I CAN BLOW THEIR HEADS TO BITS IF THEY STEP OUT OF LINE.
IMPLANTS FAIL. THAT RADIATION GUY, CHERNOBYL— WHAT IF HE FIGURES OUT HOW TO BLOCK THE SIGNAL?
DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE H.A.R.D. CORPS PROGRAM? THEY'RE WHAT WE WERE CREATED TO FIGHT!

THEY'RE NOT HUMAN. COMPARED TO US, THEY'RE LIKE GODS.
ANGRY, SADISTIC, INSANE GODS WHO CAN KILL US ALL.

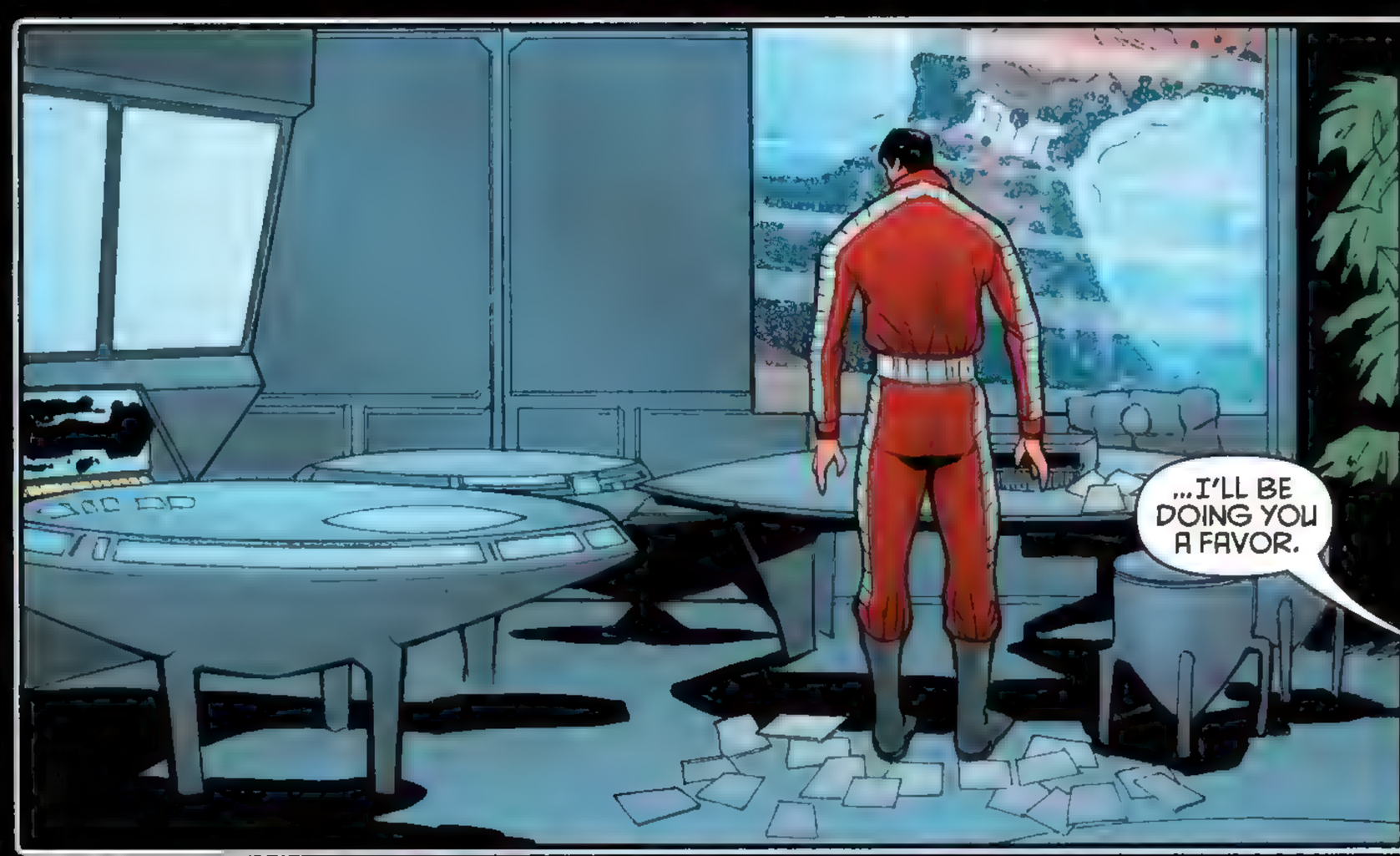

YOU'RE RIGHT. THEY'RE JUST LIKE THE BEINGS WE EXIST TO FIGHT. EXCEPT THEY'RE ON *OUR SIDE.*
NOW ANSWER THE QUESTIONS I ASK YOU. WILL THEY DO WHAT THEY'RE TOLD?
GIVE THEM TARGETS TO KILL AND STUFF TO BLOW UP AND THEY'LL BE HAPPY AS PIGS IN CRAP. THAT'S NOT--

I REPEAT: IT IS *PRECISELY* THE POINT!
YOU ASKED IF I KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT H.A.R.D. CORPS. THE ANSWER IS YES. I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE LONG, BUT I'VE DONE MY RESEARCH.
DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY HAVE DIED SINCE H.A.R.D. CORPS WAS CREATED?

HERE THEY ARE!

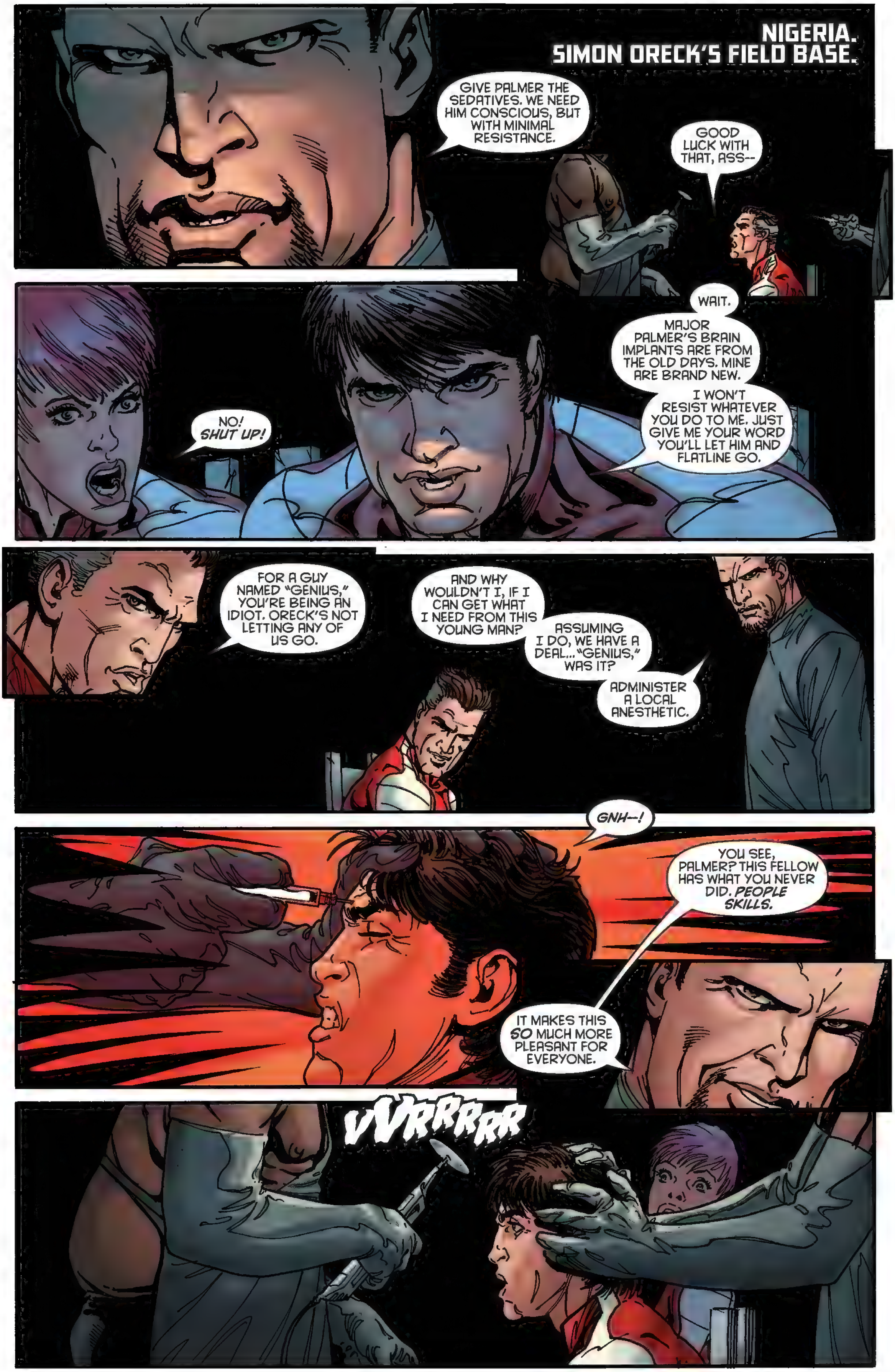
LOOK AT THEM!

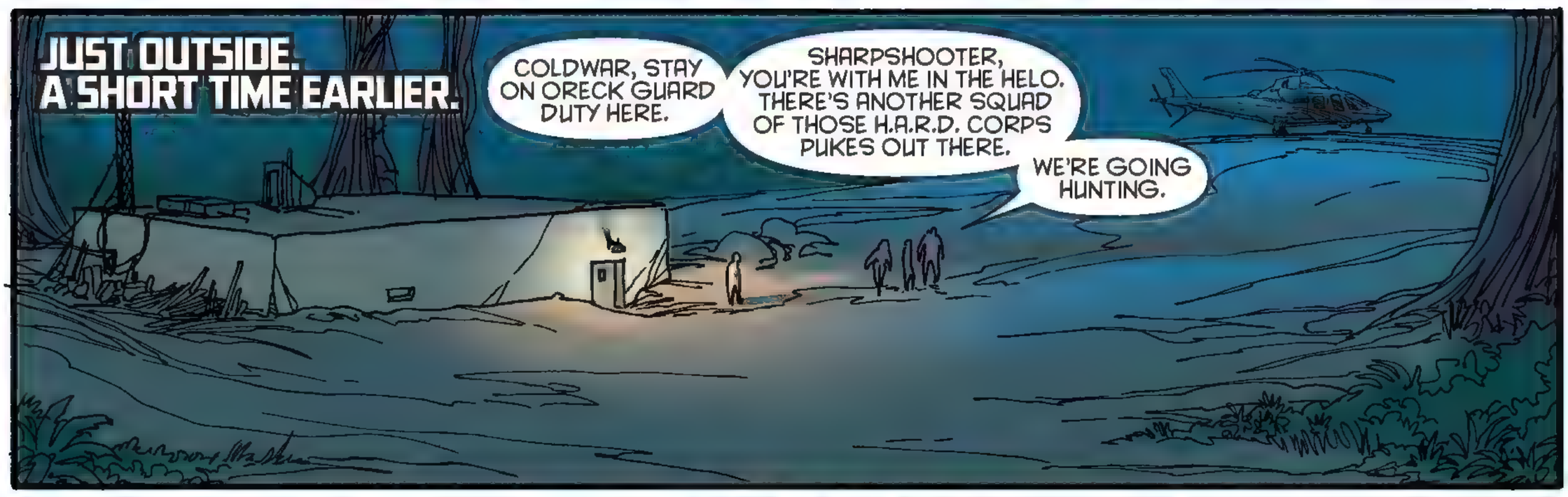
H.A.R.D. CORPS IS A MEAT GRINDER. AN *EXPENSIVE* AND *INEFFECTIVE* ONE.
I DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO SHUT IT DOWN NOW. BUT I WILL SOON. AND WHEN I DO...


...I'LL BE DOING YOU A FAVOR.

NOW.
MAJOR PALMER. I SUPPOSE WE HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON AFTER ALL.
NEITHER ONE OF US TAKES VERY WELL TO FORCED RETIREMENT.
DON'T BOTHER TRYING TO USE YOUR ABILITIES. THIS FACILITY IS A *FARADAY CAGE.* SHIELDED AGAINST ALL TRANSMISSIONS.
W-WHY...AM I ALIVE? IF YOU THINK... P.R.S.'LL GIVE YOU MONEY FOR ME...YOU'RE DELUSIONAL.
REALLY, MAJOR. DON'T TELL ME YOU STILL THINK THIS IS ABOUT THE MONEY. I MEAN, I'LL TAKE IT, IF THEY SEND IT. THE GOVERNOR CERTAINLY WANTS IT. BUT I HAVE A LONGER GAME.
GO AHEAD, SAY IT: "I TOLD YOU SO." THE YOUNG, ARROGANT SIMON ORECK THOUGHT PSIOTS LIKE THE SPECIALISTS MADE H.A.R.D. CORPS OBSOLETE. HE WAS *WRONG.*
YOU SAW THEM. BIG BOY'S OWN BODY WOULD TEAR HIM APART IF NOT FOR ALL THE DRUGS WE PUMP INTO HIM. CHERNOBYL IS A WALKING TUMOR.
THEY'RE *BREAKING DOWN.* AND AN INDEPENDENT OPERATOR LIKE ME HAS NO READY REPLACEMENTS.
I LURED YOU HERE BECAUSE I WANT YOUR *IMPLANTS,* MAJOR PALMER. BECAUSE AT LAST I UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF H.A.R.D. CORPS.
IF YOU USE THE GOOD CHINA AT EVERY MEAL, IT WEARS OUT. YOU SAVE IT FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS. FOR EVERYDAY USE, YOU WANT SOMETHING *REPLACEABLE.*
IF WE DIE, OUR IMPLANTS EXPLODE. NO OUTSIDE SIGNAL REQUIRED.
I KNOW. WHICH IS WHY YOU WON'T DIE. BUT I DARE SAY...
...YOU'LL SOON *WISH* YOU HAD.

CHRISTOS GAGE | JOSHUA DYSART | BART SEARS | CHRISCROSS | MATT MILLA
VALIANT
#19
BLOODSHOT®
and H.A.R.D. CORPS
GET SOME


NIGERIA.
SIMON ORECK'S FIELD BASE.
GIVE PALMER THE SEDATIVES. WE NEED HIM CONSCIOUS, BUT WITH MINIMAL RESISTANCE.
GOOD LUCK WITH THAT, ASS--
WAIT.
MAJOR PALMER'S BRAIN IMPLANTS ARE FROM THE OLD DAYS. MINE ARE BRAND NEW.
I WON'T RESIST WHATEVER YOU DO TO ME. JUST GIVE ME YOUR WORD YOU'LL LET HIM AND FLATLINE GO.
NO! SHUT UP!
FOR A GUY NAMED "GENIUS," YOU'RE BEING AN IDIOT. ORECK'S NOT LETTING ANY OF US GO.
AND WHY WOULDN'T I, IF I CAN GET WHAT I NEED FROM THIS YOUNG MAN?
ASSUMING I DO, WE HAVE A DEAL... "GENIUS," WAS IT?
ADMINISTER A LOCAL ANESTHETIC.
GNH--!
YOU SEE, PALMER? THIS FELLOW HAS WHAT YOU NEVER DID. PEOPLE SKILLS.
IT MAKES THIS SO MUCH MORE PLEASANT FOR EVERYONE.
VVRRRRR

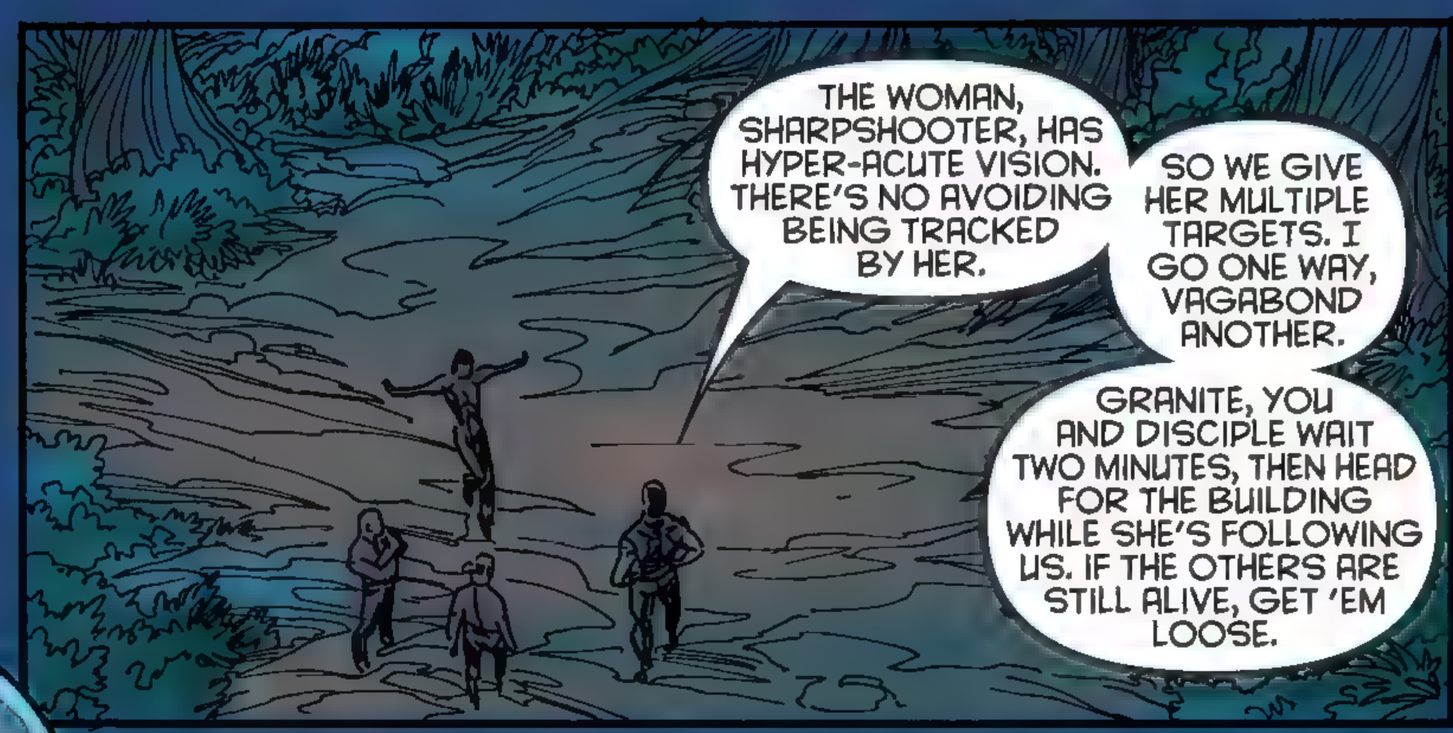

JUST OUTSIDE.
A SHORT TIME EARLIER.
COLDWAR, STAY ON ORECK GUARD DUTY HERE.
SHARPSHOOTER, YOU'RE WITH ME IN THE HELO. THERE'S ANOTHER SQUAD OF THOSE H.A.R.D. CORPS PUKES OUT THERE.
WE'RE GOING HUNTING.

NOT *YOU*, DUMBASS. YOU THINK WE WANT CANCER? YOU WALK.

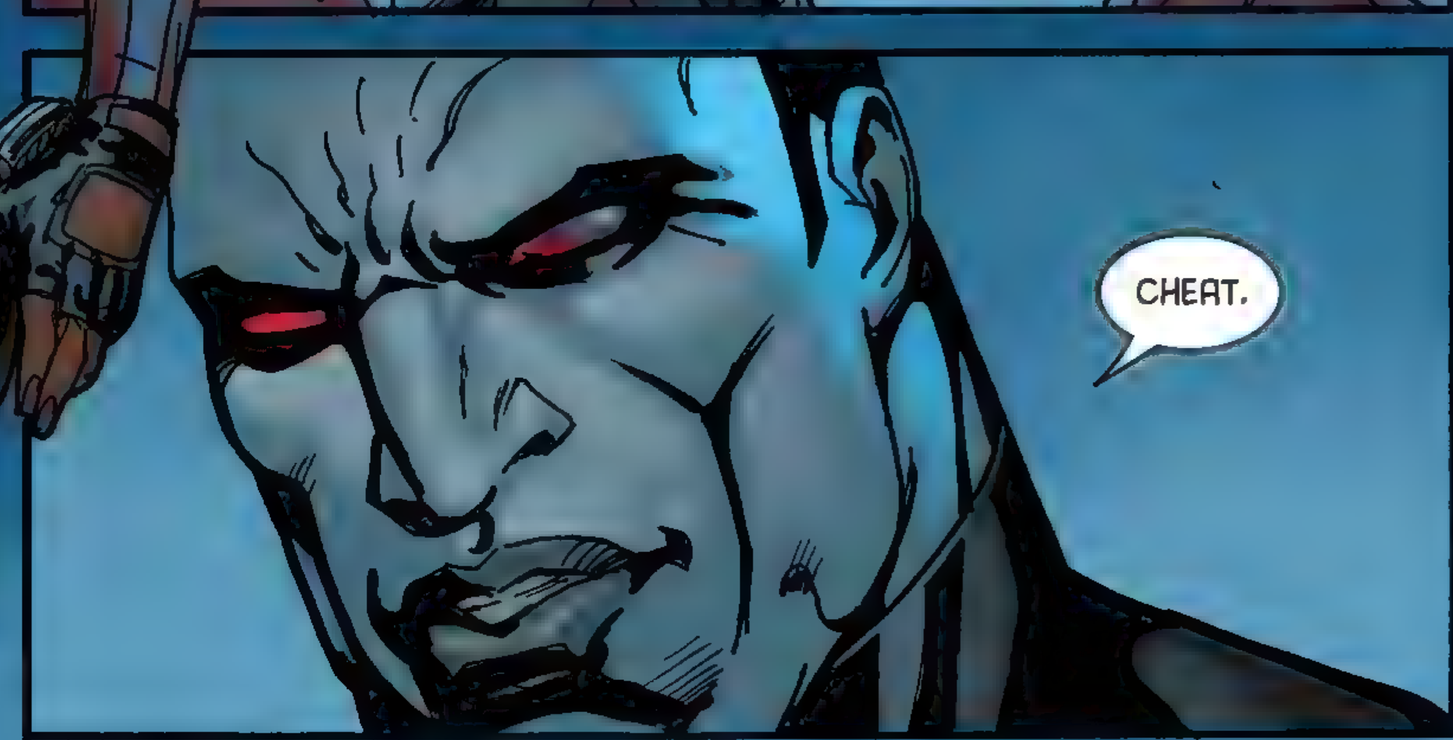
DON'T TAKE IT PERSONAL, CHERNOBYL.
YEAH, COLDWAR. I KNOW.

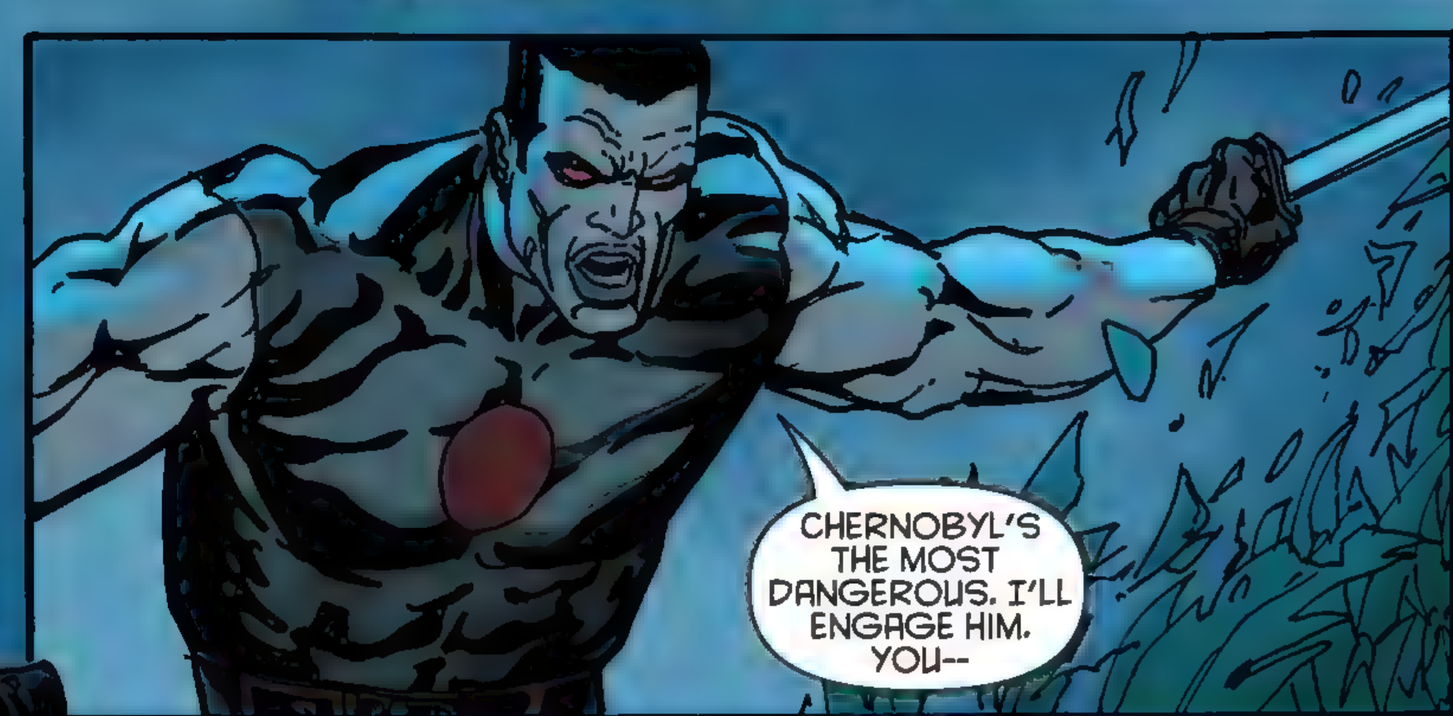
HE'S GOT SHARPSHOOTER. LAST TIME I HAD A GIRL, SLICK WILLIE WAS PRESIDENT. I CAN'T EVEN GET NEXT TO A HOOKER WITHOUT KILLING HER. WHAT'S HE THINK THAT'S LIKE?
EASY, BROTHER. TAKE YOUR MEDS. THAT AND A LITTLE RIGHTEOUS VENGEANCE'LL PUT A BETTER LIGHT ON THINGS.
YEAH, YEAH, I'M TAKIN' EM. DOESN'T HELP, THOUGH. ONLY ONE THING DOES.
LUCKY FOR BIG BOY I GOT OUR TARGETS TO DO IT TO INSTEAD'A HIM.

NOT FAR AWAY.


THE WOMAN, SHARPSHOOTER, HAS HYPER-ACUTE VISION. THERE'S NO AVOIDING BEING TRACKED BY HER.
SO WE GIVE HER MULTIPLE TARGETS. I GO ONE WAY, VAGABOND ANOTHER.
GRANITE, YOU AND DISCIPLE WAIT TWO MINUTES, THEN HEAD FOR THE BUILDING WHILE SHE'S FOLLOWING US. IF THE OTHERS ARE STILL ALIVE, GET 'EM LOOSE.

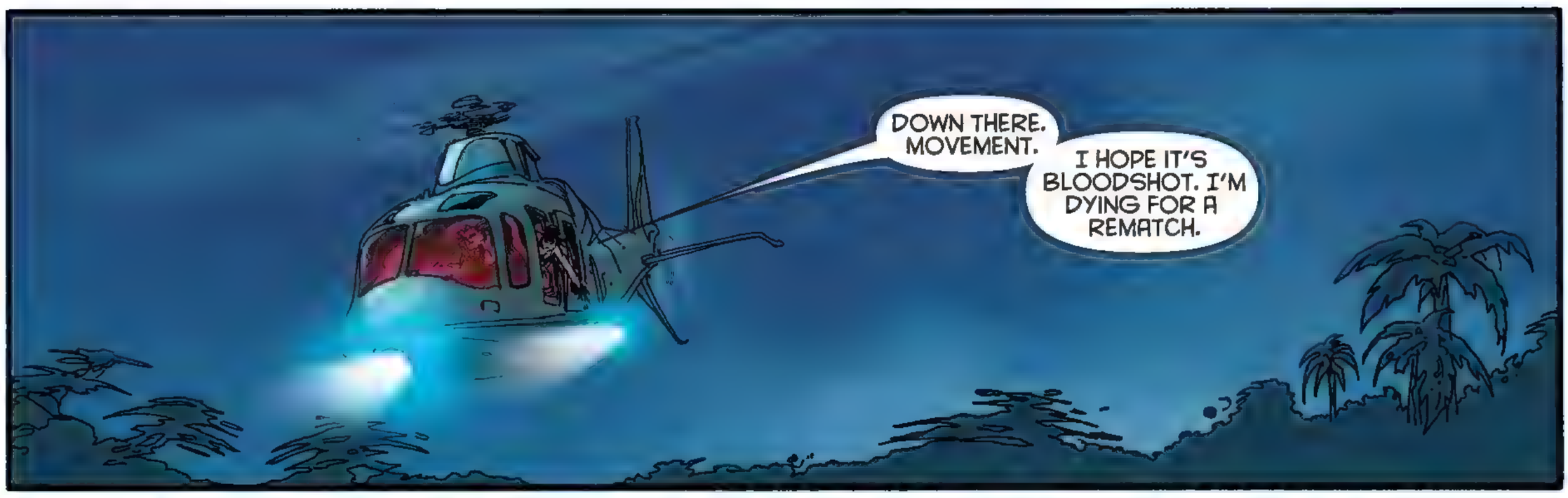
OUR MISSION'S TO RESCUE MR. KOZOL, BLOODSHOT. I KNOW YOU DON'T LIKE HIM, BUT THEY WON'T EVAC US WITHOUT HIM.
IF KOZOL'S STILL ALIVE, EITHER HE'S IN THAT BUILDING, OR HE'S TOO FAR AWAY TO MATTER.
YEAH, UH, I HATE TO BE A BUZZKILL, BUT THESE SPECIALIST DUDES PRETTY MUCH SPANKED US THE FIRST TIME. HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO WIN NOW?


CHEAT.

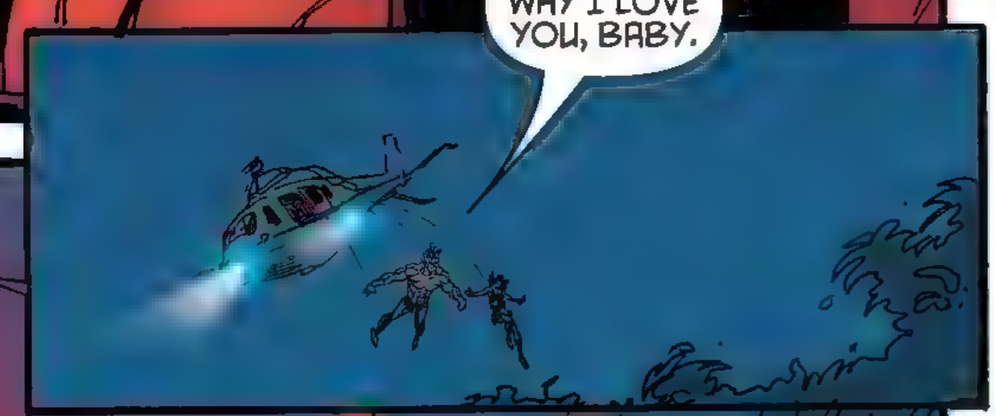

CHERNOBYL'S THE MOST DANGEROUS. I'LL ENGAGE HIM. YOU--

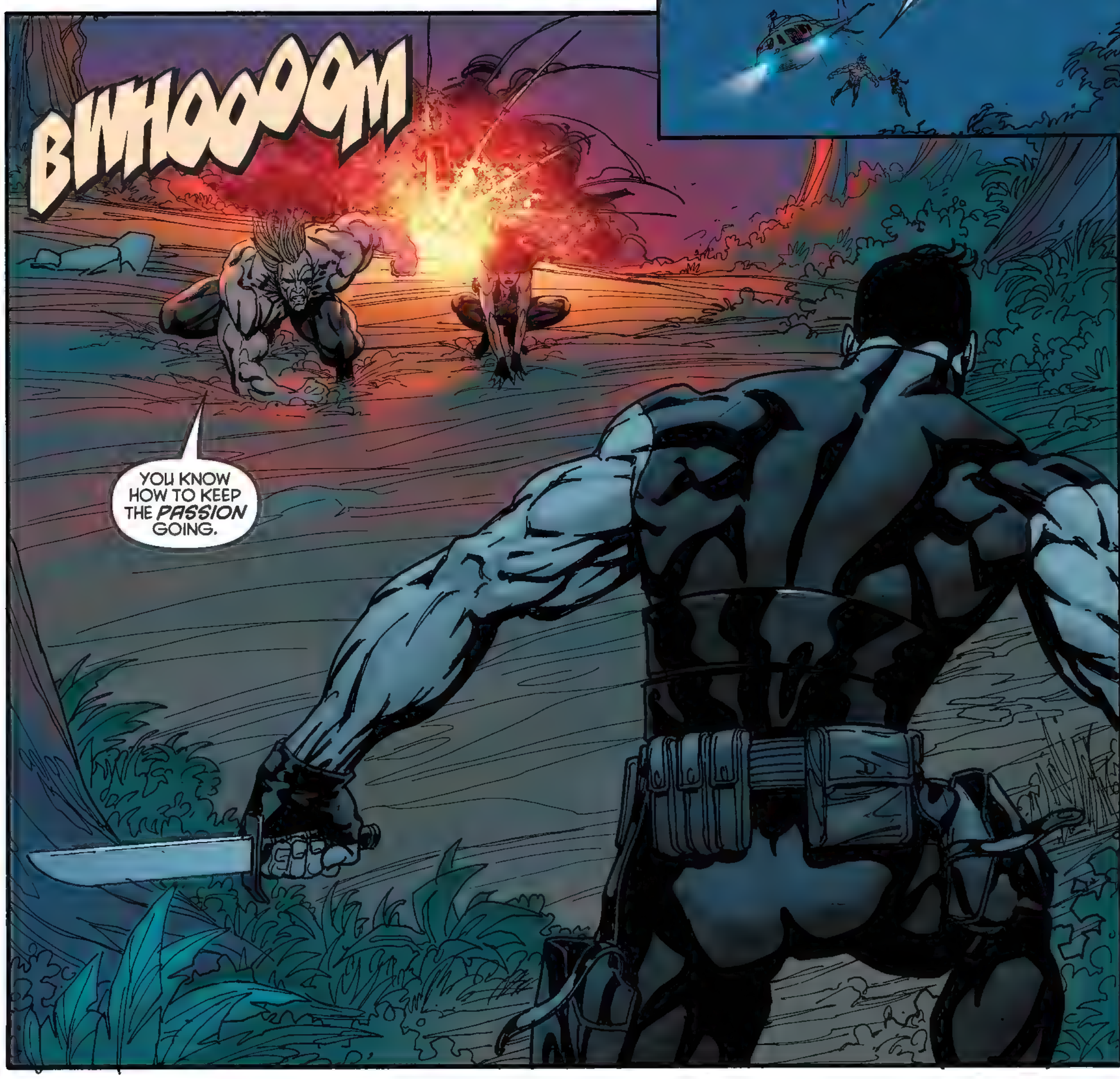
NAH. YOU TAKE SONNY AND CHER.
I GOT THIS.

I SEE A HELICOPTER TAKING OFF. AND THE RADIOACTIVE GUY'S HEADED IN OUR DIRECTION.
GOOD SPOTTING, GRANITE. GET BACK DOWN HERE.


DOWN THERE. MOVEMENT.
I HOPE IT'S BLOODSHOT. I'M DYING FOR A REMATCH.

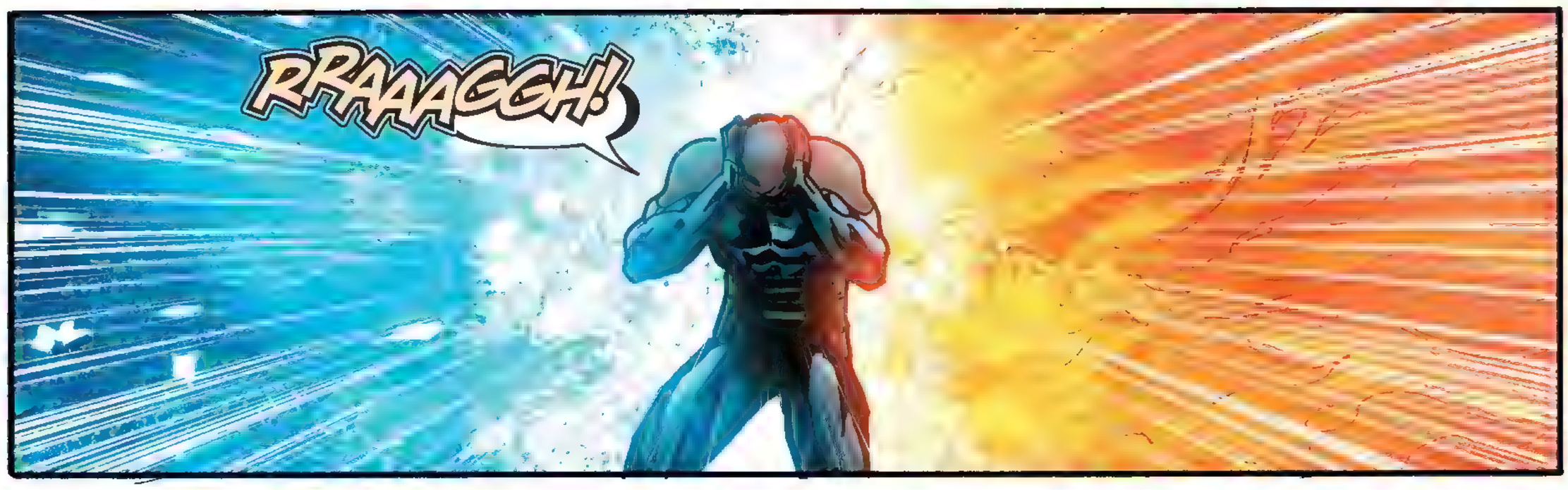
KKRRAKK
IT *IS!*

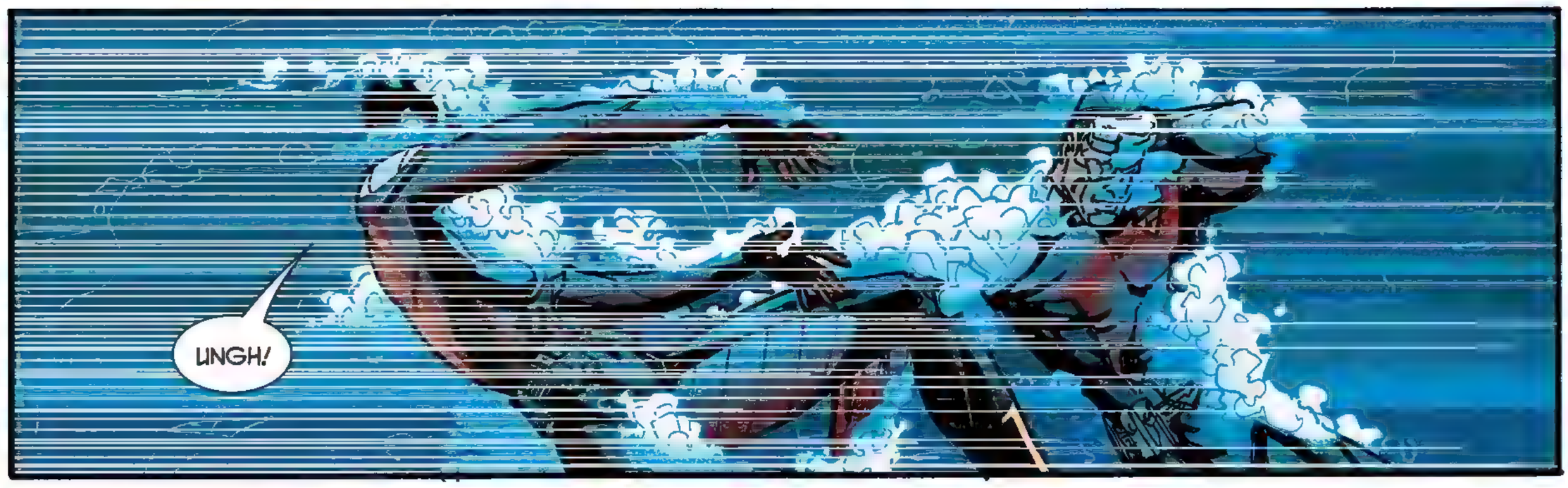

THAT'S WHY I LOVE YOU, BABY.


BWHOOOOM
YOU KNOW HOW TO KEEP THE *PASSION* GOING.

OKAY, DISCIPLE, WE HAVE TO STRIKE FAST.
LIFELINE, PREP NEURAL SPIKE DOWNLOAD.
LIFELINE, GIVE ME SHIELD. I'LL PROVIDE COVER.
ON THREE. ONE... TWO...

...THREE!
REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
NGGAAHH!

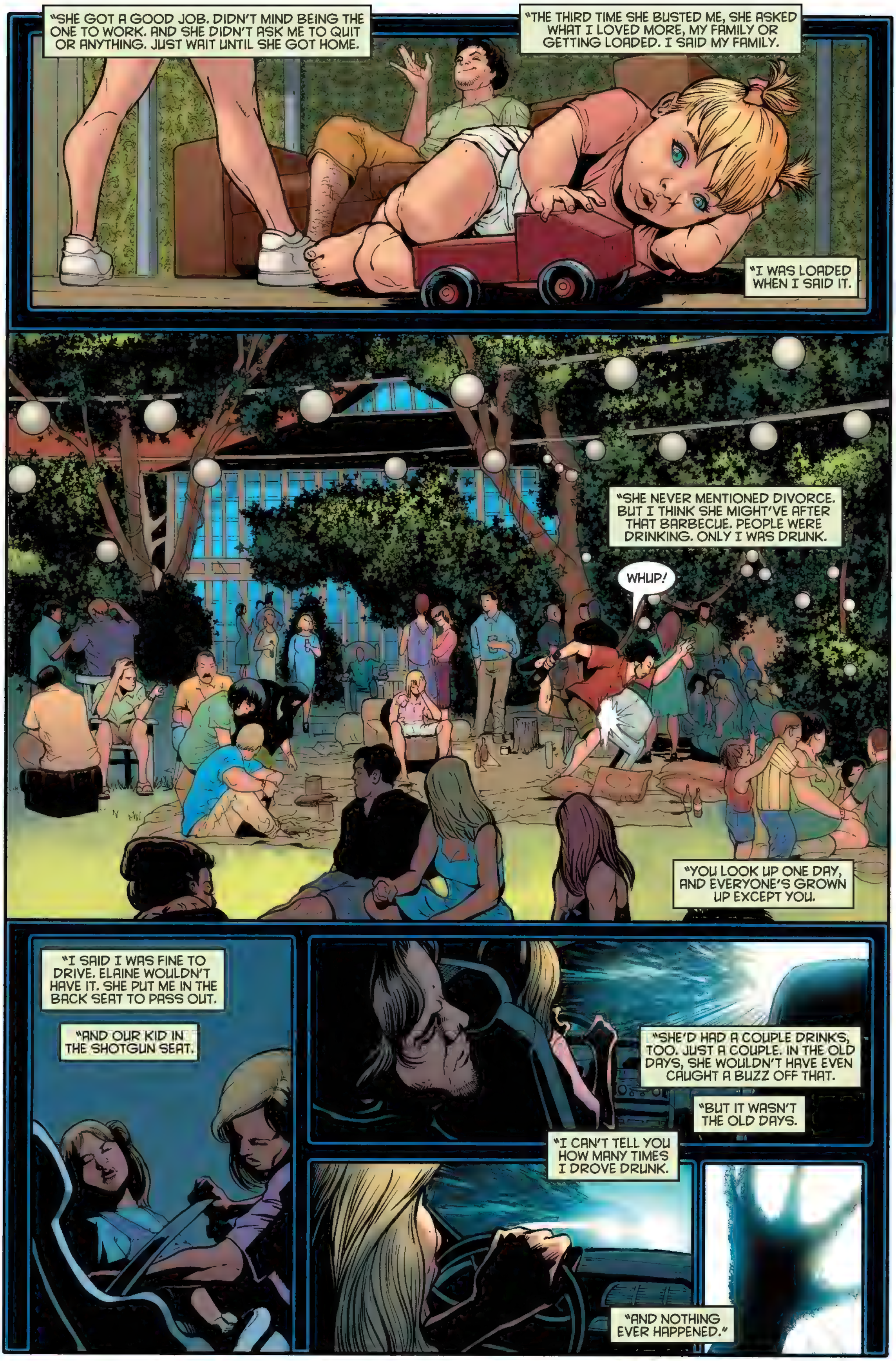

RRAAAGGH!


UNGH!

CHILDREN. I'VE BEEN DOING THIS LONGER THAN YOU'VE BEEN ALIVE.
WHICH IS WHY I'M STILL HERE...AND YOU SOON WON'T BE.

SHIELDS WON'T PROTECT YOU FROM RADIATION. I'LL GIVE YOU FLIGHT, MAYBE YOU CAN--
NAH, LIFELINE. GIVE ME SUGGESTION MODE.
IT'S NOT MIND CONTROL, VAGABOND. YOU HAVE TO--
I KNOW WHAT IT IS! NOW DOWN-LOAD IT!
HEY.
HEY, MAN. TRUCE. WANT A TOKE?
WHAT'RE YOU, NUTS?
MEDICINAL. I BET YOU COULD USE IT, AM I RIGHT?
YOU AIN'T WRONG.
LISTEN, YOU SEEM OKAY. YOU WANNA LIVE, GET OUT OF HERE. I DON'T ESPECIALLY WANT TO KILL YOU.
NO. YOU WANT TO DIE YOURSELF.
WHAT THE HELL WOULD MAKE YOU SAY THAT TO ME?
TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE.
DEATH WISH GAYDAR, I GUESS.
LEMME TELL YOU A STORY.

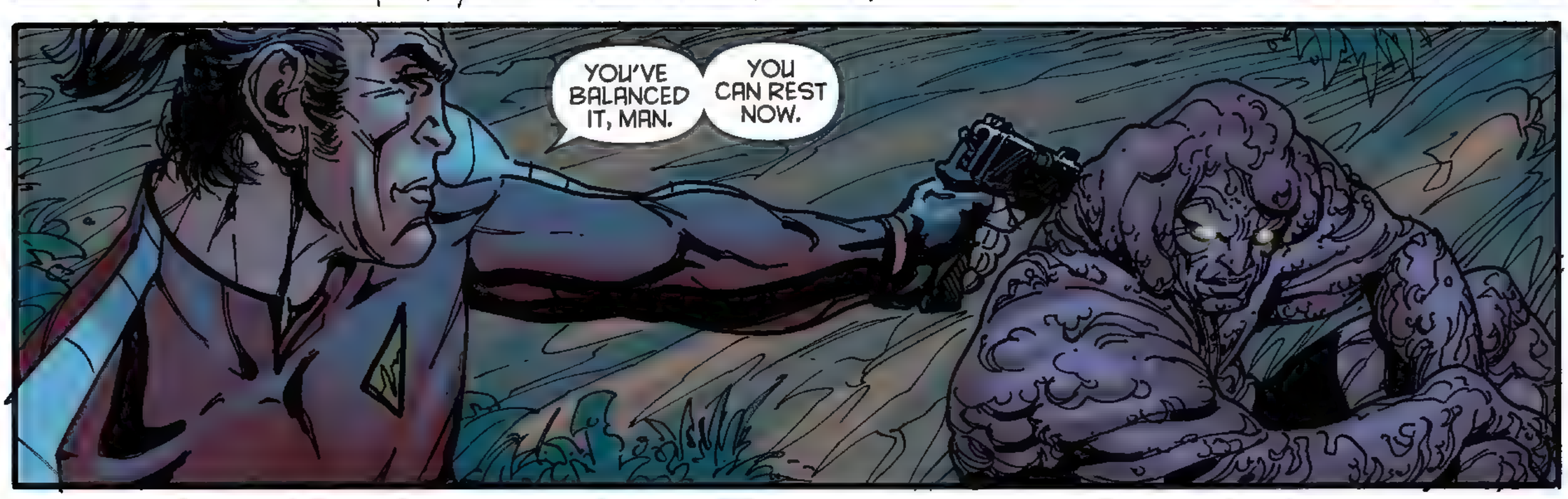
"THIS MIGHT COME AS A SHOCK. I DIDN'T DO SO HOT IN SCHOOL.
"GRADES, I MEAN. I DID GREAT AT EVERYTHING ELSE. ALWAYS HAD A GOOD BUZZ, GOOD FRIENDS, AND GOOD WEED.
"AND *ELAINE.* SHE WAS A LOT LIKE ME... BUT SMARTER. STRONGER. SHE FINISHED SCHOOL. I FLUNKED OUT.
"NOT SURE WHY SHE STAYED WITH ME. I MEAN, I CAN'T *EXPLAIN* IT...BUT I KNOW. WE BOTH DID, THE MINUTE WE SAW EACH OTHER.
"IT WAS GONNA BE HER AND ME, FROM THEN ON OUT.
"WE JUST *CLICKED,* Y'KNOW? DIDN'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE RAT RACE, MATERIAL CRAP... JUST WANTED TO HAVE FUN.
"THE THING ABOUT FUN, THOUGH...
"...SOMETIMES IT HAS *CONSEQUENCES.*
"I NEVER PLANNED ON KIDS. BUT DAMN, I ADORED THAT LITTLE GIRL. LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT, TWICE IN ONE LIFE. LUCKY MAN.
"DIDN'T SEE A REASON TO CHANGE, THOUGH. IT'S NOT LIKE I WAS DOING HARD STUFF.
"BUT ELAINE WENT SUBSTANCE-FREE FOR THE PREGNANCY. AND LIKE I SAID, SHE WAS ALWAYS STRONGER AND SMARTER THAN ME."


"SHE GOT A GOOD JOB. DIDN'T MIND BEING THE ONE TO WORK. AND SHE DIDN'T ASK ME TO QUIT OR ANYTHING. JUST WAIT UNTIL SHE GOT HOME.
"THE THIRD TIME SHE BUSTED ME, SHE ASKED WHAT I LOVED MORE, MY FAMILY OR GETTING LOADED. I SAID MY FAMILY.
"I WAS LOADED WHEN I SAID IT.
"SHE NEVER MENTIONED DIVORCE. BUT I THINK SHE MIGHT'VE AFTER THAT BARBECUE. PEOPLE WERE DRINKING. ONLY I WAS DRUNK.
WHUP!
"YOU LOOK UP ONE DAY, AND EVERYONE'S GROWN UP EXCEPT YOU.
"I SAID I WAS FINE TO DRIVE. ELAINE WOULDN'T HAVE IT. SHE PUT ME IN THE BACK SEAT TO PASS OUT.
"AND OUR KID IN THE SHOTGUN SEAT.
"SHE'D HAD A COUPLE DRINKS, TOO. JUST A COUPLE. IN THE OLD DAYS, SHE WOULDN'T HAVE EVEN CAUGHT A BUZZ OFF THAT.
"BUT IT WASN'T THE OLD DAYS.
"I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MANY TIMES I DROVE DRUNK.
"AND NOTHING EVER HAPPENED."

"I WALKED OUT WITH JUST A FEW SCRATCHES. PROBABLY BECAUSE MY BODY WAS RELAXED, BEING PASSED OUT AND ALL.
"DRINKING SAVED MY LIFE.
"WASN'T NOBODY TO TELL ME NOT TO GET LOADED NOW. SO I DIDN'T SEE ANY REASON NOT TO.
"DIDN'T SEE ANY REASON TO DO MUCH ELSE, EITHER.
"YEAH, I WANTED TO DIE. BUT I KEPT WAKING UP IN THE MORNING. GUESS I HAD SOME SCALES TO BALANCE.
"PROJECT RISING SPIRIT GAVE ME THE CHANCE TO DO BOTH AT THE SAME TIME.
"LIKE I SAID..."

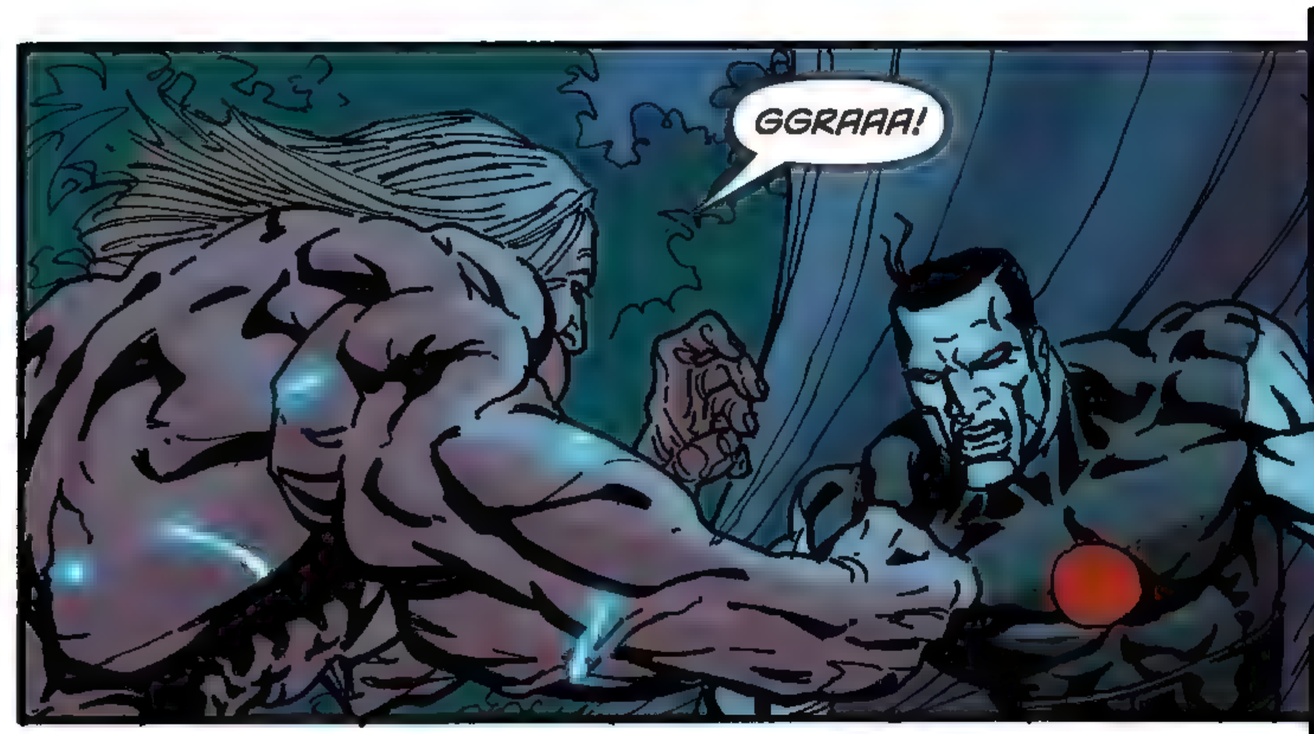
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN LUCKY.
I HAD A WIFE. TWO KIDS.
SHE TOOK 'EM AND LEFT WHEN THEIR HAIR STARTED FALLING OUT. DIDN'T HELP. THEY'RE ALL GONE NOW. LEUKEMIA.
HOW LONG YOU BEEN SERVING?

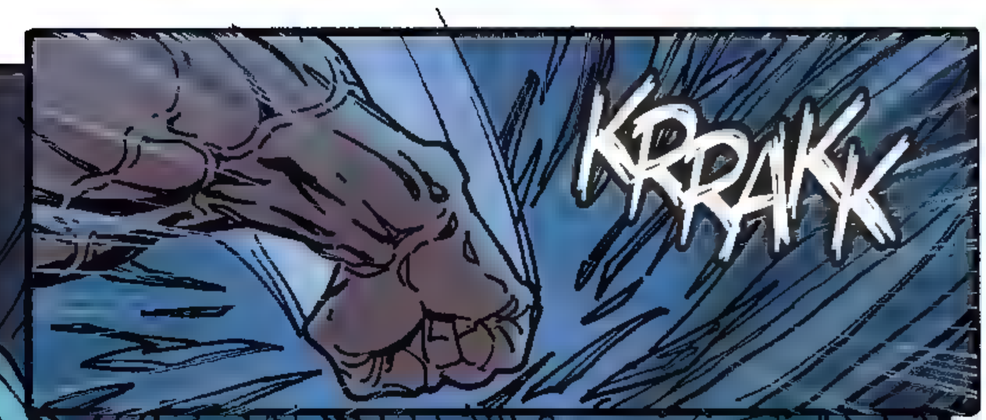
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS.


YOU'VE BALANCED IT, MAN.
YOU CAN REST NOW.

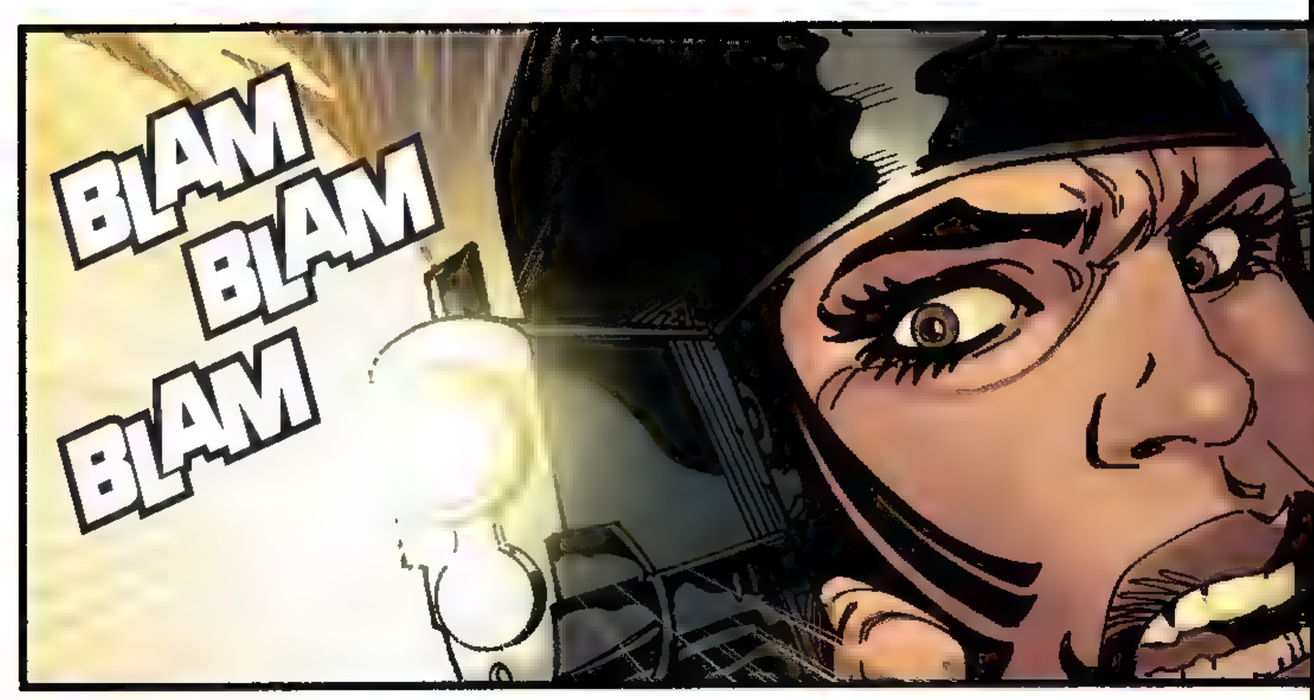
THANK YOU.

BLAM
OUTSTANDING WORK, VAGABOND.
YEAH. THANKS.
I'M JUST GONNA SIT HERE A MINUTE, LIFELINE.
JUST FOR A MINUTE.

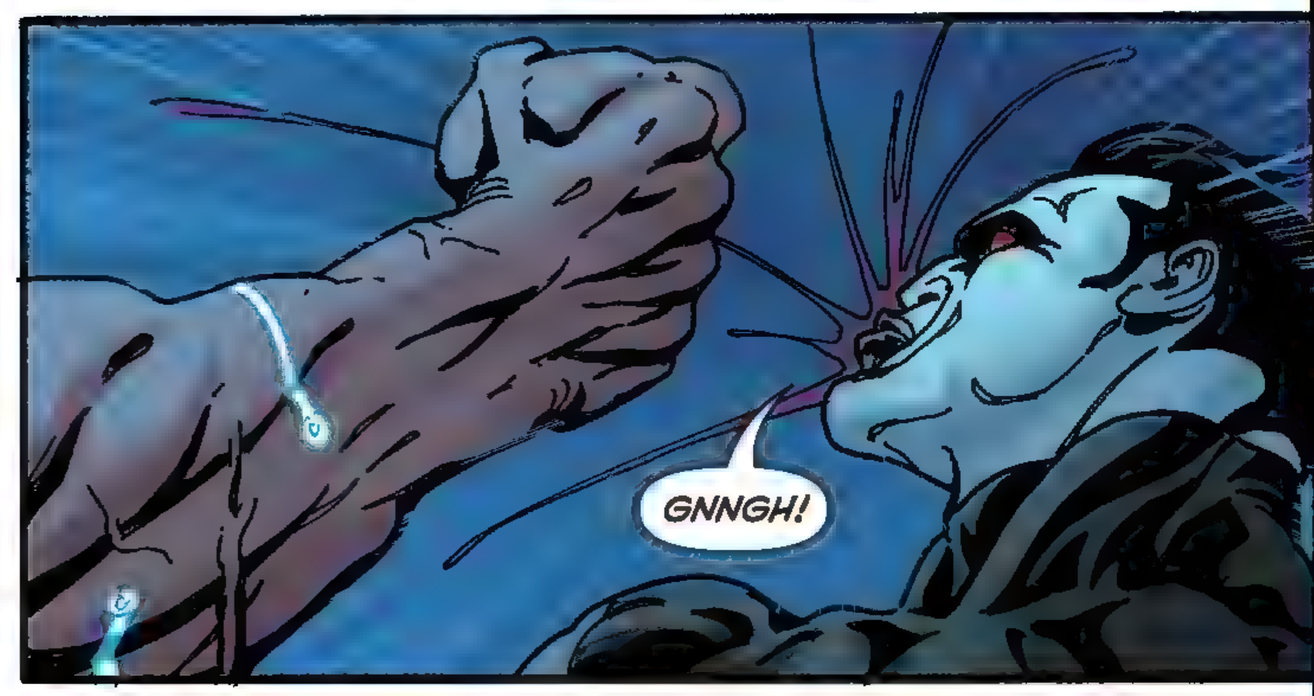

GGRAAA!


KRRAKK

BLAM


BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

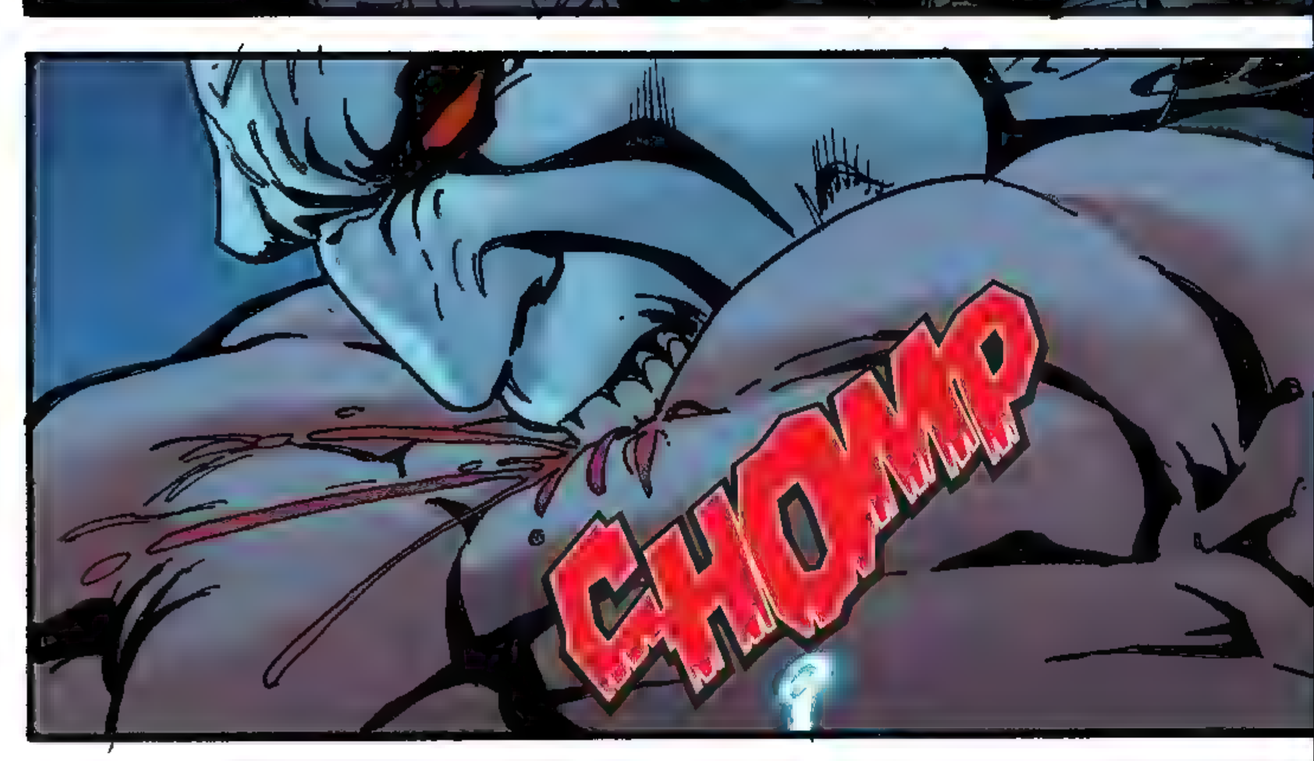
HA! YOU CAN'T WIN, TOUGH GUY. 'CAUSE YOU'RE ALONE, AND WE'VE GOT EACH OTHER.
BLAM


GNNGH!

ORECK TOLD US ABOUT YOU.

YOU CAN HEAL, BUT YOU NEED PROTEIN. AND YOU DON'T HAVE ANY.

WRONG.


CHOMP

NNAAGGH!

ARRGGH!
FREAK!

YOU PEOPLE CALL US MONSTERS? YOU'RE THE MONSTER!
AND I'M GONNA PUT YOU DOWN. CAN YOU REGENERATE YOUR BRAIN?
D-DUNNO.
UHH...
CAN YOU REGENERATE YOUR BOYFRIEND?
W-WHAT?

BASTARD... POISONED ME...
NO. YOUR OWN BODY POISONS YOU. ORECK'S CYBERNETICS PUMP YOU FULL OF CHEMICALS. OR YOU'D HAVE DIED YEARS AGO.
DID ORECK TELL YOU ABOUT MY NANITES? MY BLOOD CAN TALK TO MACHINES. EVEN ENCRYPTED ONES. I JUST SHUT YOURS OFF.
YOU CAN'T WIN. 'CAUSE YOU'VE GOT EACH OTHER.

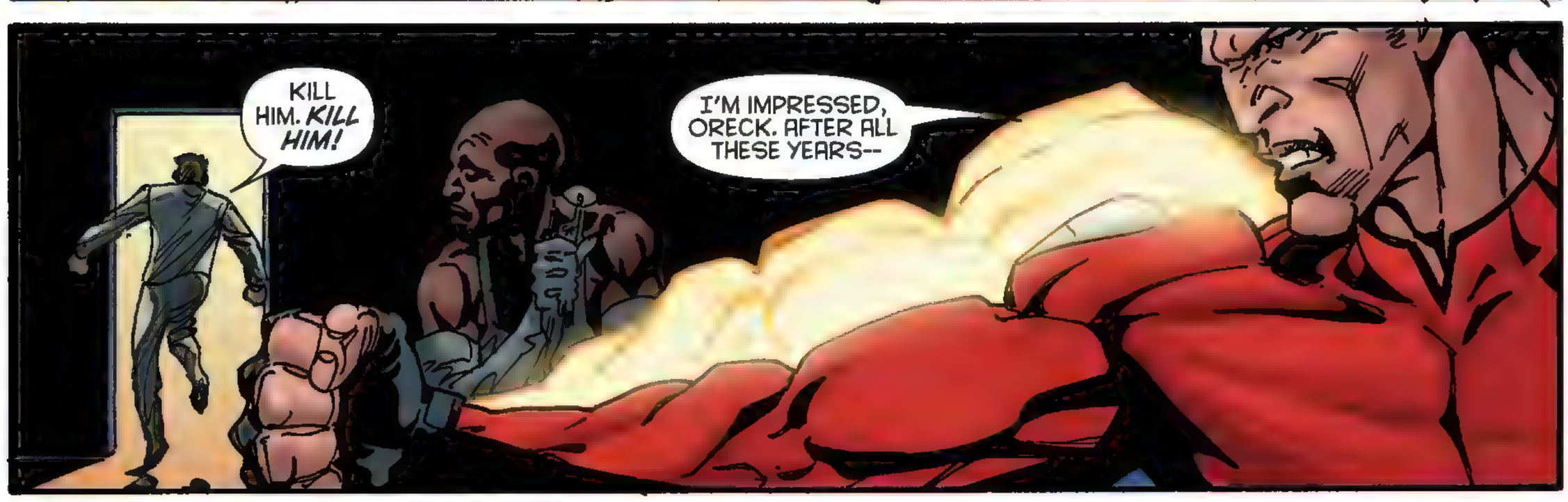
NO! PLEASE, TURN THEM BACK ON! WHAT DO YOU WANT? YOU WANT YOUR FRIENDS? I CAN TELL YOU WHERE--
ORECK.
I WANT ORECK.

AH, GHOST MODE. YOUR LIFELINE TECHS ARE VERY GOOD.
BUT AS I RECALL, YOU CAN'T BREATHE IN GHOST MODE.
FIRE EATS UP OXYGEN. I'LL JUST MAKE SURE YOU CAN'T BREATHE WHEN YOU TURN SOLID, EITHER.
GRANITE, DISCIPLE, THIS IS LIFELINE.
STAND BY FOR NEW POWER DOWNLOAD.
FIRE
IDIOTS. THIS BUILDING'S A FARADAY CAGE. SEALED AGAINST ALL ENERGY. YOU CAN'T GHOST THROUGH IT, AND IF YOU SOLIDIFY--
IF WE SOLIDIFY, WHAT?
WHAT?
W-WHY AREN'T YOU DYING? WHY--
FIRE MODE. GIVES US RESISTANCE TO FIRE ALONG WITH THE POWER TO MAKE IT.
AND ALL WE NEED IS A MINUTE. DISCIPLE! BLOW THE WALL!
BKNCH
LIFELINE, GIVE ME DETONATION!

STOP IT! PLEASE!
YOU KNOW, YOUR CARRYING ON IS PROBABLY BOTHERING HIM MORE THAN THE SAW...

WHAT--?
BRRMMM
--READ? CHARLIE, DO YOU READ ME?
LIFELINE. GIVE ME--

--MUSCLE.
KRNCH

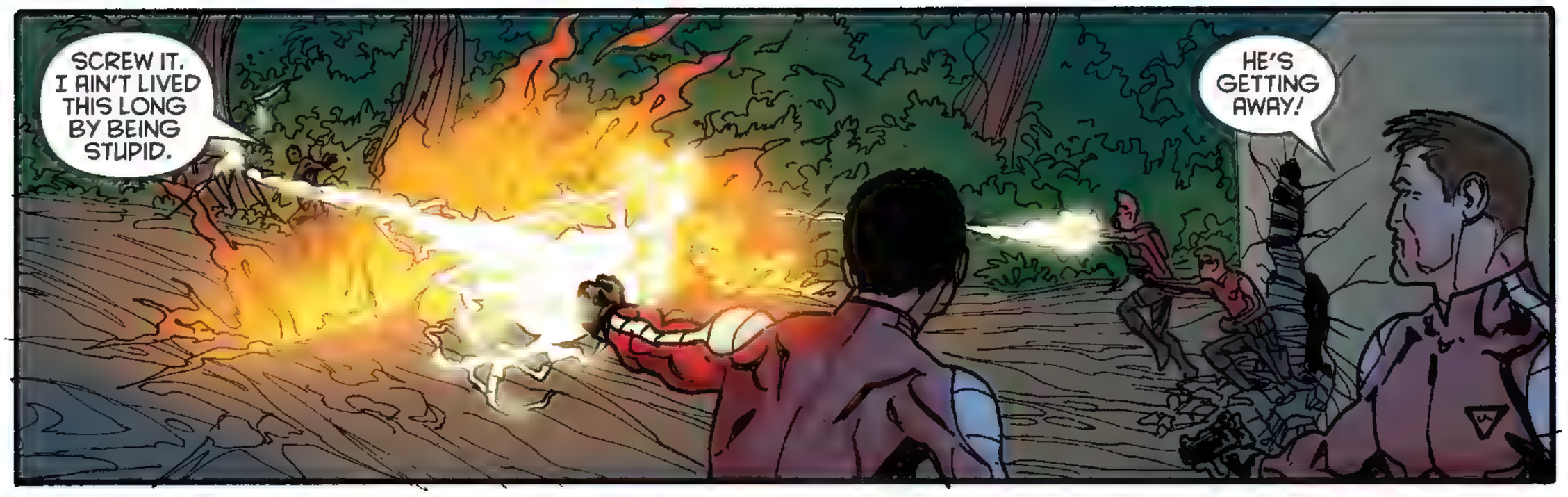

KILL HIM. KILL HIM!
I'M IMPRESSED, ORECK. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS--

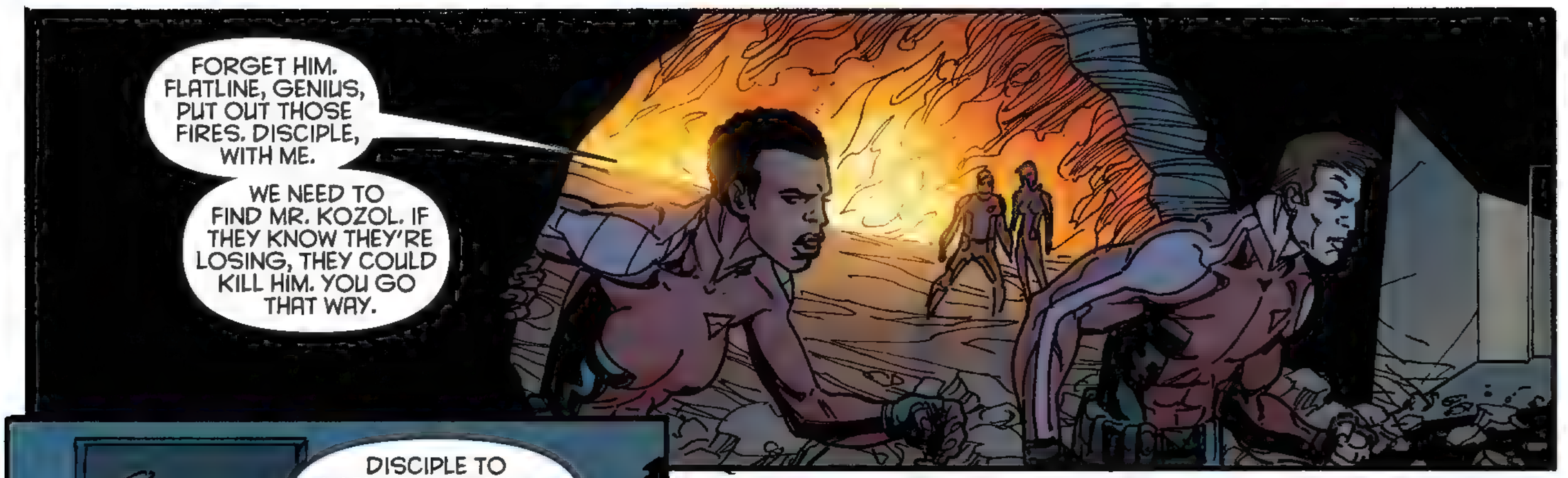
--YOU'RE STILL GREAT AT MAKING PEOPLE DIE FOR YOU.
VRRESKLGH

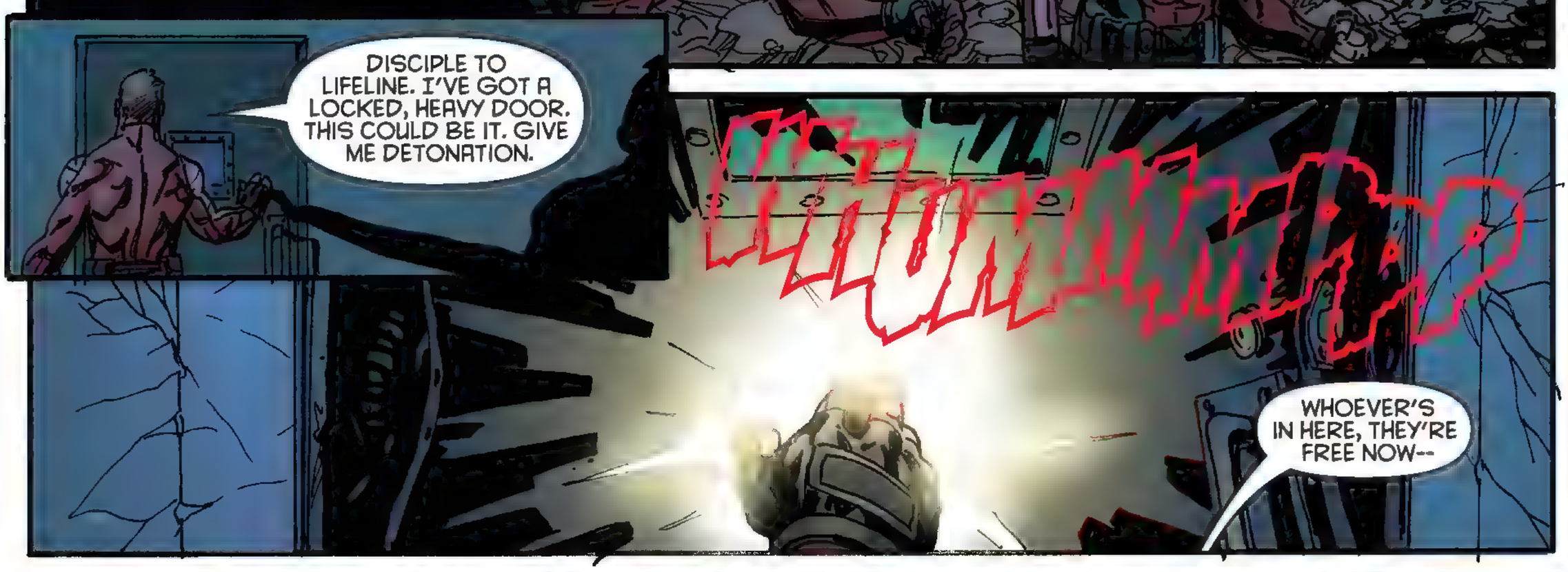
GUARDS! WE'RE UNDER ATTACK! DEAL WITH IT!
COLDWAR! CHERNOBYL! COME IN!
BIG BOY! SHARPSHOOTER! WE'RE ON EVAC! PLAN C!
DAMN YOU ALL! FOLLOW ORDERS OR I'LL DETONATE THE BOMBS IN YOUR HEADS!
BBWHOOOM
I TOLD YOUR GOONS I'D KILL YOU BEFORE YOU COULD BLOW THEIR HEADS OFF.

BUT BETWEEN YOU AND ME, IF YOU WANNA TAKE A SECOND, GO AHEAD.
I DON'T SUPPOSE I CAN CONVINCE YOU TO COME WORK FOR ME?
ALREADY DID THAT. IT'S WHY I WANT TO SLICE YOU INTO TINY PIECES.
AND YET, HERE YOU ARE, WORKING FOR P.R.S.
THAT'S ITS OWN THING. AND NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
I STILL HAVE FRIENDS AT P.R.S.-- I KNOW YOU NEED THEM TO CLEANSE YOUR NANITES PERIODICALLY, TO KEEP THEM FROM CONSUMING YOUR OWN BODY.
THEY COULD FIX THE PROBLEM ENTIRELY, YOU KNOW. CURE YOU. BUT THEY LIKE HAVING THIS METHOD OF KEEPING YOU UNDER THEIR THUMB.
YOU SAY THAT LIKE I HADN'T FIGURED IT OUT ALREADY. TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW.
ALL RIGHT.
I CAN CURE YOU, TOO.
YOUR NANITES ARE CONSTANTLY REPLICATING THEMSELVES. CURRENTLY, THEY HAVE A FLAW IN THEIR PROGRAMMING. AND THEY BUILD THAT FLAW INTO THE NEW ONES. A BIT LIKE CANCER CELLS.
WHAT P.R.S. DOES TO YOU ALLEVIATES THE EFFECTS OF THE FLAW, BUT DOES NOT REMOVE IT. I CAN.
NOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO PUT ME DOWN, SO WE CAN TALK LIKE MEN?

WHY WOULD YOU BE CARRYING A CURE FOR A PROBLEM I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE WHEN YOU FLED P.R.S.?
OH, I DIDN'T TAKE IT AS A CURE. I TOOK IT AS A WEAPON.
I FIGURED YOU MIGHT COME AFTER ME. I KNOW HOW SINGLE-MINDED YOU CAN BE.
AND HOW HARD YOU ARE TO STOP.
THIS WILL INJECT PROTOTYPE VERSIONS OF YOUR NANITES INTO YOUR SYSTEM. AS THEY MAKE CONTACT WITH EXISTING NANITES, THEY WILL OVERWRITE THEIR PROGRAMMING.
RESTORE THEM TO "FACTORY DEFAULT SETTINGS," AS IT WERE. IT WILL BE QUITE PAINFUL, AND TAKE SOME TIME TO COMPLETE.
THERE'S A CHANCE IT'LL ERASE ALL YOUR MEMORIES, TOO, BUT I THINK YOU'VE BEEN COGNIZANT LONG ENOUGH THAT IT SHOULD ONLY AFFECT THE ARTIFICIAL ONES.
I KEPT THIS AS A MEANS TO CAUSE YOU PAIN, GIVE ME A CHANCE TO ESCAPE, AND POSSIBLY BRING YOU BACK UNDER MY THUMB.
INSTEAD, IT WILL SAVE YOUR LIFE, AND TAKE ALL THE FAKE MEMORIES OUT OF YOUR HEAD.
IT ALMOST SEEMS LIKE KISMET, DOESN'T IT?
WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?
YOU LET ME GO. I WON'T EVEN MAKE YOU PROMISE NOT TO COME AFTER ME. BUT I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY, BLOODSHOT. YOU WERE JUST ANOTHER ASSET.
P.R.S. IS YOUR ENEMY NOW. AND IF YOU WIPE THEM OUT... WELL, THAT MIGHT BRING A SMILE TO BOTH OUR FACES.
YOUR NANITES TALK TO MACHINES. SURELY BY NOW THEY'VE ANALYZED WHAT'S IN HERE. CONFIRMED IT'S WHAT I SAY.
I CAN GIVE THIS TO YOU. OR I CAN CRUSH IT BEFORE YOU CRUSH ME.
WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?


SCREW IT. I AIN'T LIVED THIS LONG BY BEING STUPID.
HE'S GETTING AWAY!

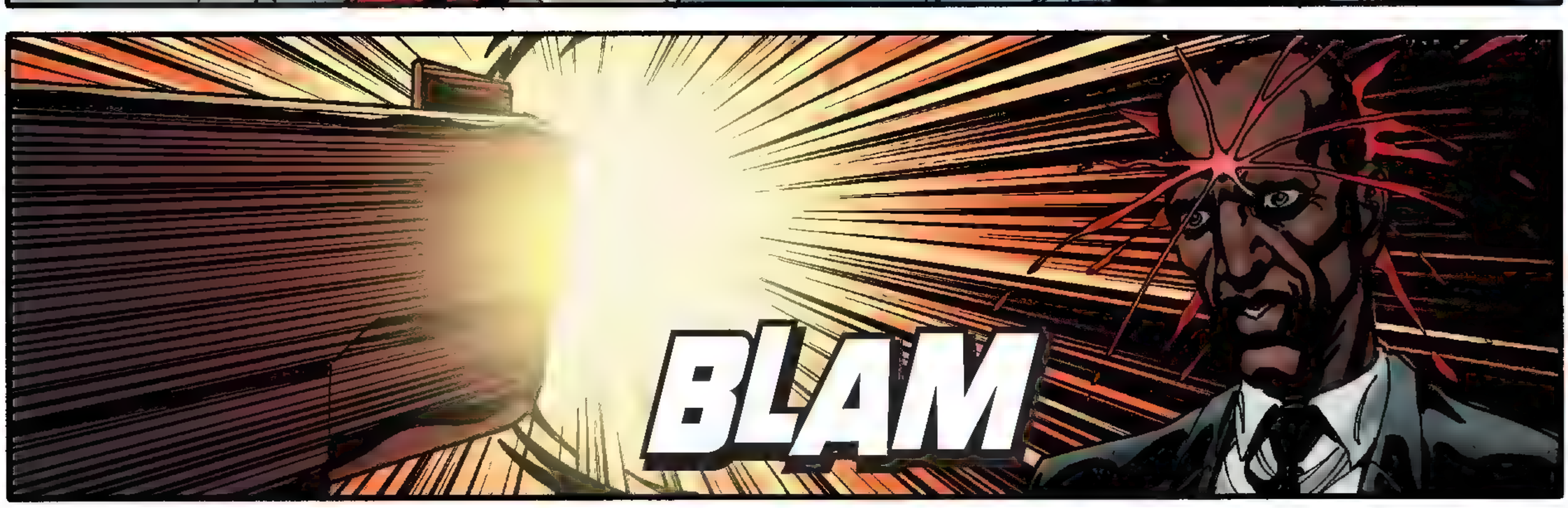

FORGET HIM. FLATLINE, GENIUS, PUT OUT THOSE FIRES. DISCIPLE, WITH ME.
WE NEED TO FIND MR. KOZOL. IF THEY KNOW THEY'RE LOSING, THEY COULD KILL HIM. YOU GO THAT WAY.


DISCIPLE TO LIFELINE. I'VE GOT A LOCKED, HEAVY DOOR. THIS COULD BE IT. GIVE ME DETONATION.
WHOEVER'S IN HERE, THEY'RE FREE NOW--

GOD IN HEAVEN.
F-FREE?

PRAISE GOD. I PRAYED SO LONG. I NEVER LOST FAITH.
I KNEW IN MY HEART HE WOULD DELIVER US.

BWHOOM
MY COMPLIMENTS, MR. KOZOL. YOUR PEOPLE ARE MOST EFFECTIVE. HOWEVER, YOU ARE FAR FROM SAFE.
YOUNG LADY, I AM GOVERNOR HERE. ORECK WORKS FOR ME. LET US DISCUSS WHAT WILL HAPPEN FOR YOUR BOSS TO LEAVE HERE ALIV--


BLAM

MR. KOZOL, WHAT DID THEY DO TO YOU?
A FEW BEATINGS. I EXPECTED WORSE. THANK YOU FOR COMING FOR ME. I'M SURE NOT EVERYONE WAS THRILLED AT THE PROSPECT.

I WAS AFRAID WE'D LOST YOU.
YOU NEEDN'T GET SO UPSET. I'M AS REPLACEABLE AS ANYONE IN THIS ORGANIZATION.
NOT TO ME.
COME ON. LET'S GET YOU HOME.

LET ME GUESS. ORECK'S IN THAT COPTER.
YEAH. I JUST MISSED HIM.
RUNNING AT THE FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE IS KIND OF HIS THING. GOOD NEWS IS, WE DIDN'T LOSE ANYONE FOR A CHANGE.
AND HEY, MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. WE GOT KOZOL BACK, THE GOVERNOR'S DEAD, AND OTHERS LIKE HIM WILL GET THE MESSAGE: YOU WANT TO SKIM, DON'T GET GREEDY.
PLUS, OIL THEFT BY THE LOCALS SHOULD GO WAY DOWN, NOW THAT A BUNCH OF THEM GOT KILLED DOING IT. ARMOUR OIL'S GONNA BE THRILLED.
STATUS QUO STAYS THE SAME, RICH GET RICHER, POOR GET SCREWED. JUST ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE.
WELCOME TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.
YOU OKAY?
HURTING LIKE HELL.
TOOK A BEATING FIGHTING BIG BOY AND SHARPSHOOTER.
YOUR NANITES PROBABLY NEED AN AMINO ACID BATH. FRESHEN 'EM UP.
YEAH. THAT SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT.
DON'T WORRY. WE'LL GET ANOTHER SHOT AT ORECK.
YEAH, PROBABLY. NOT THE END OF THE WORLD IF WE DON'T.
NEVER FIGURED YOU AS THE TYPE TO TURN THE OTHER CHEEK.
I'M NOT. BUT I CAN SET PRIORITIES. AND ORECK'S NOT HIGH ON THE LIST THESE DAYS.
ANYWAY, WHAT DO YOU CARE?

"WHAT DID ORECK EVER DO TO YOU?"
YEARS AGO.
YOU CAN'T SHUT DOWN H.A.R.D. CORPS!
ACTUALLY, PALMER, I CAN. I'M IN CHARGE NOW. THAT MEANS I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT.
AFTER ALL THESE PEOPLE HAVE GIVEN YOU, SACRIFICED FOR YOU, YOU'RE JUST CUTTING THEM LOOSE?
HARDLY. THEY GET A PENSION AND FREE MEDICAL COVERAGE FOR LIFE. PROVIDED THEY DON'T BREACH THE CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT.
AND BY NEVER USING THEIR IMPLANTS AGAIN, THEY COULD SURVIVE DECADES LONGER THAN THEY WOULD HAVE OTHERWISE. IT SOUNDS LIKE A FINE DEAL TO ME.
MANIAC'S ALREADY NOT FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS. THESE GUYS CAN'T FUNCTION ON THEIR OWN.
AND THESE PSIOTS, THESE MONSTERS LIKE HIM... THEY'RE LOOSE CANNONS! DAMN IT, YOU NEED H.A.R.D. CORPS!
SOMEONE HERE DOES. BUT IT'S NOT ME.
LET'S BE FRANK, SHALL WE? THIS ISN'T ABOUT ME, OR BIG BOY HERE, OR YOUR TEAM. IT'S ABOUT YOU.
AND THE FACT THAT, WITHOUT H.A.R.D. CORPS, YOU HAVE NOTHING.
YOU ARE NOTHING.

SMUG SON OF A--

I AM GIVING YOU AN *OPPORTUNITY*, MAJOR PALMER. YOU HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH CAROL JARDINE IN OUR LIFELINE DEPARTMENT, CORRECT?

YOU SHOULD MARRY HER. I DARE SAY YOU WON'T FIND MANY WOMEN WHO'LL WANT TO SPEND ANY LENGTH OF TIME WITH YOU.
YOU'LL BOTH HAVE PENSIONS. YOU CAN START NEW CAREERS. LIVE HAPPILY AND QUIETLY.

BUT YOU WON'T. DO YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK IS GOING TO HAPPEN?

AT WORST, YOU'LL END UP DEAD, IN PRISON, OR IN THE GUTTER. AT BEST, YOU'LL BE A HERMIT. LIVING IN ISOLATION, TELLING YOURSELF IT'S BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO USE FOR THE WORLD.
WHEN THE TRUTH IS, IT'S THE OTHER WAY AROUND. THE REAL WORLD HAS NO USE FOR YOU.
GO AHEAD. TRY TO PROVE ME WRONG.
WE'LL TALK AGAIN, SOME YEARS FROM NOW. SEE WHO WAS RIGHT.

BUT I THINK WE BOTH KNOW THAT ALREADY.

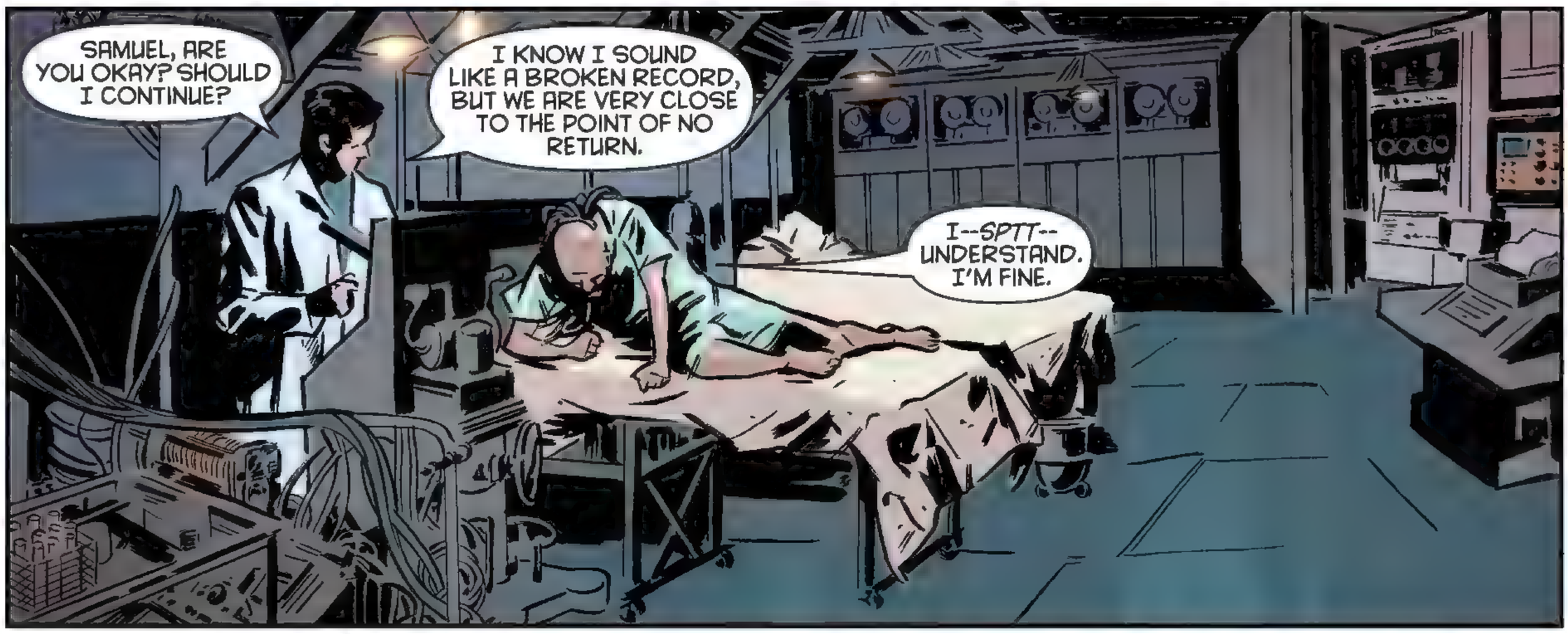
#0

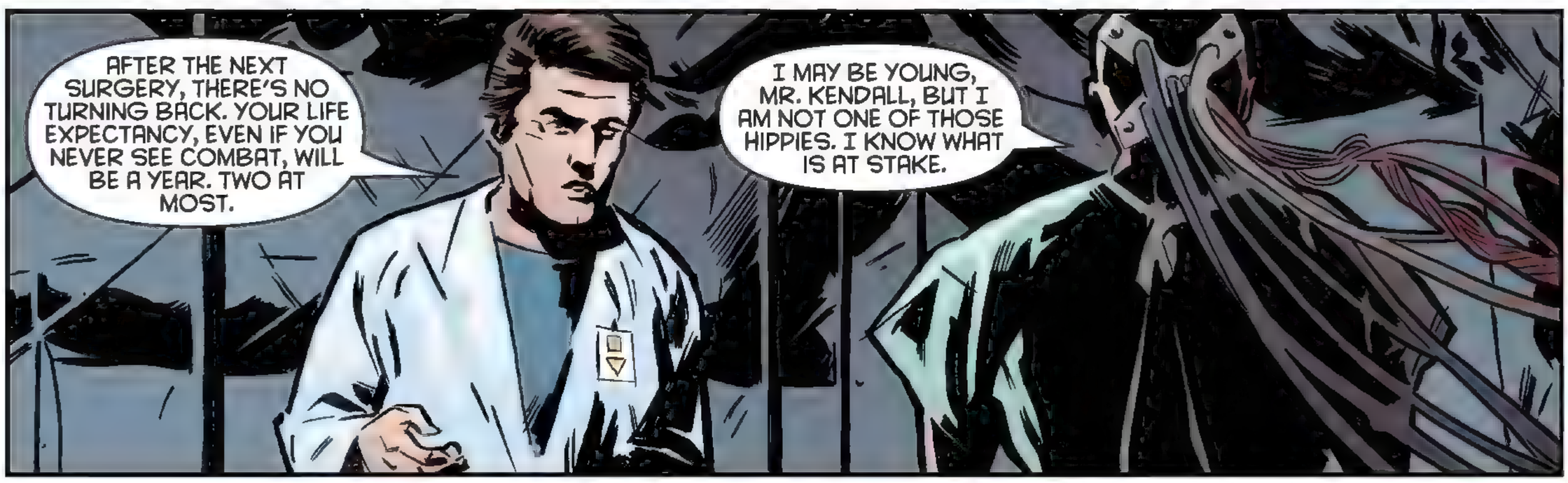
GAGE | DYSART | DE LANDRO | COOPER | CHRISCROSS | HANNIN

BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS: H.A.R.D. CORPS

THREE DECADES OF DESTRUCTION!

1970. SAIGON.
PROJECT RISING SPIRIT
RESEARCH BASE ALPHA.
GNNAAAAA!


SAMUEL, ARE YOU OKAY? SHOULD I CONTINUE?
I KNOW I SOUND LIKE A BROKEN RECORD, BUT WE ARE VERY CLOSE TO THE POINT OF NO RETURN.
I--SPTT--UNDERSTAND. I'M FINE.


AFTER THE NEXT SURGERY, THERE'S NO TURNING BACK. YOUR LIFE EXPECTANCY, EVEN IF YOU NEVER SEE COMBAT, WILL BE A YEAR. TWO AT MOST.
I MAY BE YOUNG, MR. KENDALL, BUT I AM NOT ONE OF THOSE HIPPIES. I KNOW WHAT IS AT STAKE.

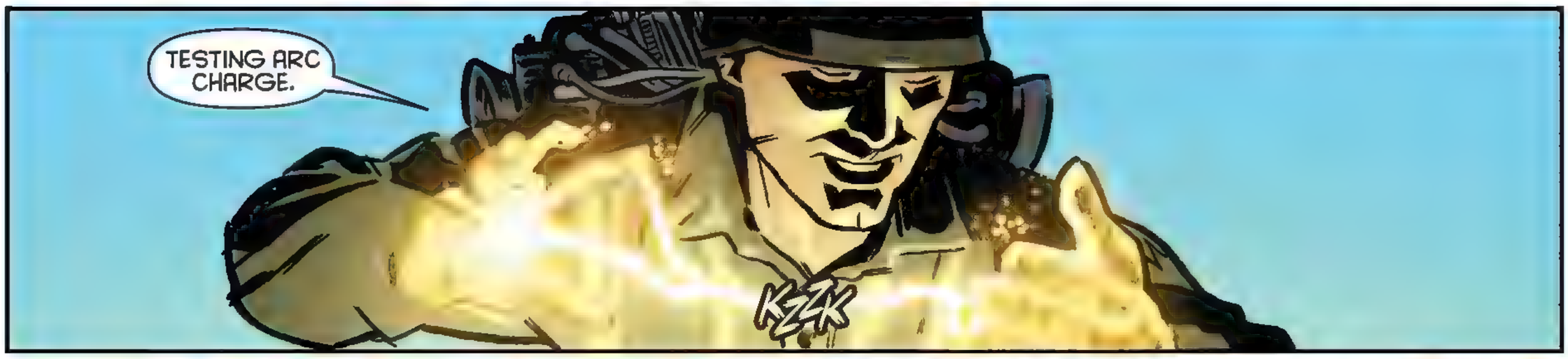
I WAS BORN UNDER COMMUNISM, IN HUNGARY. I REMEMBER HOW THE SOVIETS CRUSHED THE UPRISING. MY MOTHER AND I BARELY ESCAPED. MY FATHER DID NOT.
WE CAN'T REPEAT THE MISTAKE OF HITLER. WE MUST STOP COMMUNISM HERE, OR THE WORLD WILL SUFFER AS MY FAMILY SUFFERED.

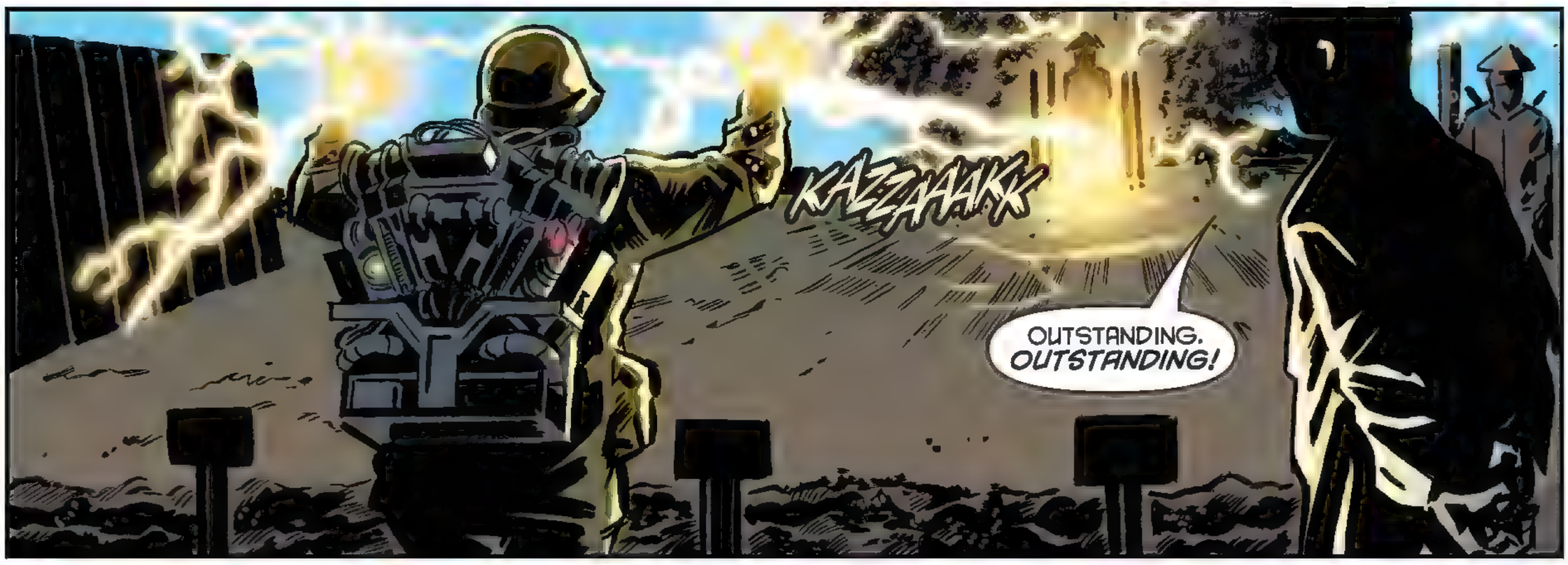
FOR THIS, I GLADLY GIVE MY LIFE. I AM HONORED TO BE THE FIRST OF WHAT I PRAY WILL BE MANY. PLEASE, MR. KENDALL--CONTINUE.

YOU'RE A GOOD AND BRAVE MAN, SAMUEL. BUT GIVEN THAT WE'RE ABOUT TO MAKE HISTORY TOGETHER, PLEASE--CALL ME ARTHUR.
AND BRACE YOURSELF. IT ONLY GETS WORSE FROM HERE.

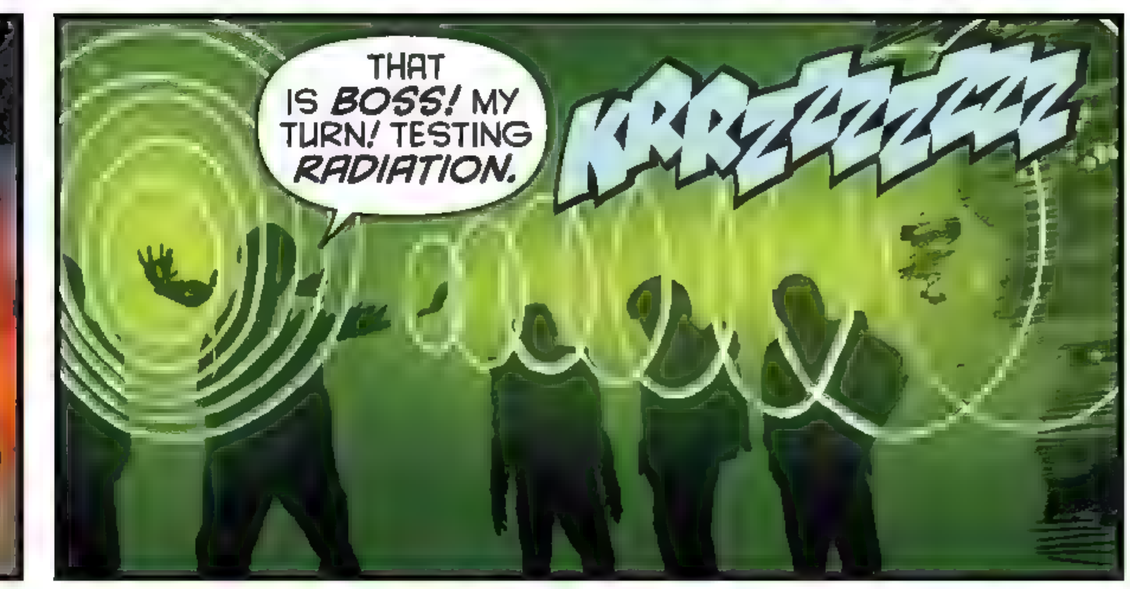
THREE MONTHS LATER.
THE EQUIPMENT'S TOO COMPLEX TO RECALIBRATE IN THE FIELD, SO WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THE SETTINGS ARE WHERE WE WANT THEM BEFORE YOU LEAVE.
WE'RE READY FOR ACTIVATION. AS YOUR NEURAL PATHWAYS RESET, YOU MAY FEEL SOME DISCOMFORT...

HNAHH!
HNN--
THERE. THE HARD PART'S OVER.
NOW-- H.A.R.D. CORPS EQUIPMENT TEST ONE.
SAMUEL?


TESTING ARC CHARGE.
KZZK


KAZZAAAKK
OUTSTANDING. OUTSTANDING!

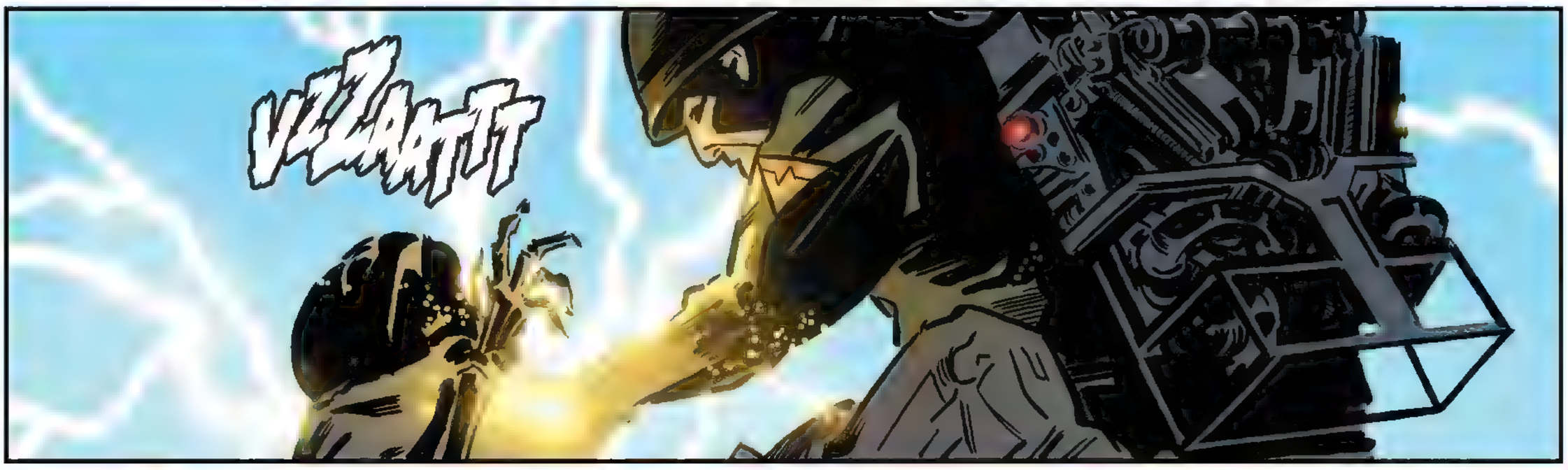
MR. TUCKER?
TESTING FIRE.
FWOOOSH


THAT IS BOSS! MY TURN! TESTING RADIATION.
KRRZZZZZZZ

MAN! I FEEL LIKE A GOD! I FEEL LIKE--
--LIKE--

EEAAAAGGHHH!

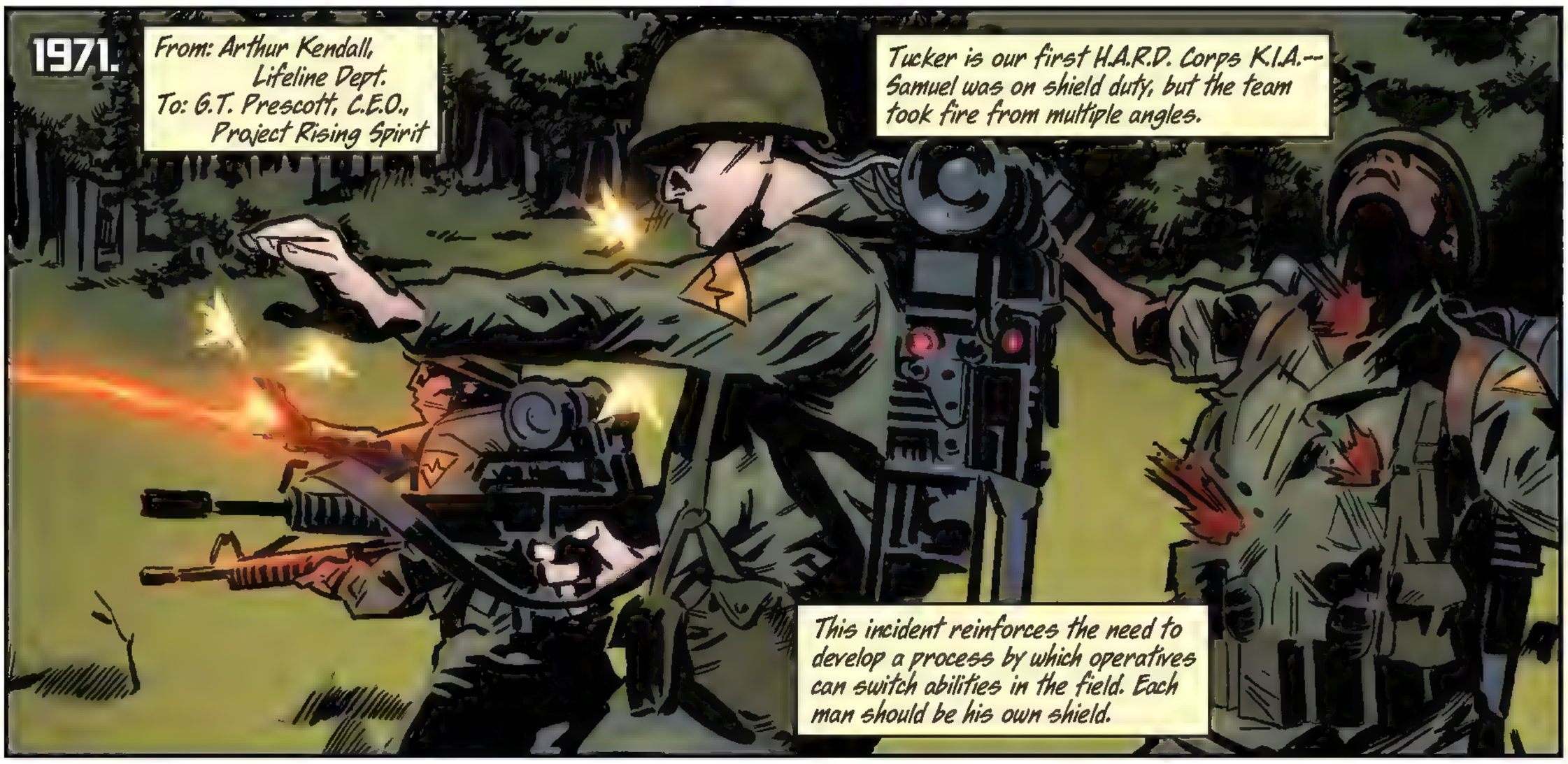
GHHUCHH--
KKHACHH--
H-HEPMEE
I'M HERE. IT'S OKAY.


VZZRATTT

WE ARE DEAD MEN. WE KNEW THIS.
HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR A CAUSE HE BELIEVED IN. TO KEEP THE WORLD FREE FROM A GREAT EVIL. MANY WILL BENEFIT FROM HIS SACRIFICE.
HIS LIFE WAS SHORTER THAN SOME. BUT MUCH MORE *IMPORTANT.*

ARTHUR, I THINK RADIATION MODE REQUIRES FURTHER STUDY.
Y-YES. I AGREE. I'LL NOTIFY MR. PRESCOTT.
TELL HIM *FIRE* AND *ARC CHARGE* ARE A SUCCESS.

WE'LL BE READY TO DEPLOY TOMORROW.


1971.
From: Arthur Kendall, Lifeline Dept.
To: G.T. Prescott, C.E.O., Project Rising Spirit
Tucker is our first H.A.R.D. Corps K.I.A.--Samuel was on shield duty, but the team took fire from multiple angles.
This incident reinforces the need to develop a process by which operatives can switch abilities in the field. Each man should be his own shield.

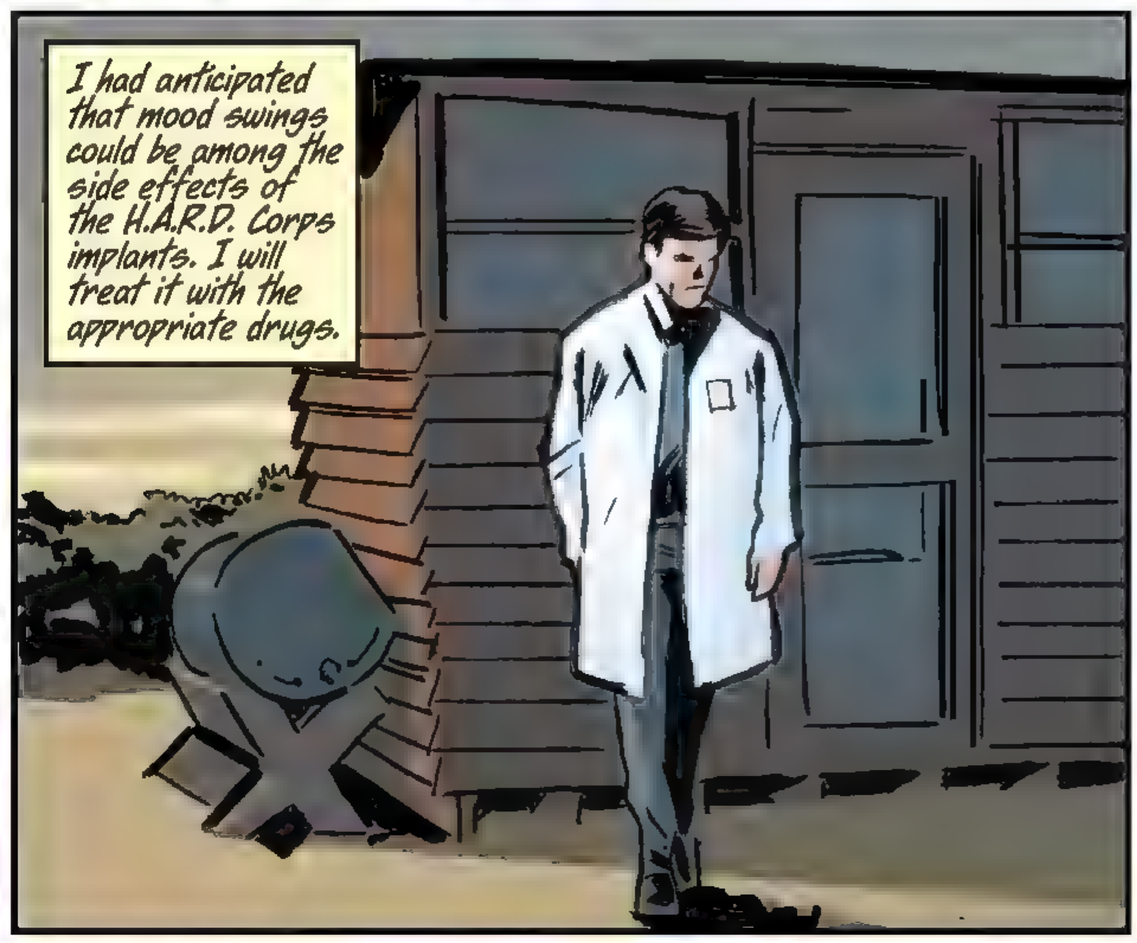
That aside, field testing of H.A.R.D. Corps operatives has exceeded our expectations. Our investors should be very pleased.

1972.
While I understand the need for operational secrecy, and that the companies making up the Vietnam builders are not authorized for combat operations, I recommend revisiting the orders concerning witnesses.
I fear excessive civilian casualties may prove psychologically damaging to our operatives, and potentially affect their performance.

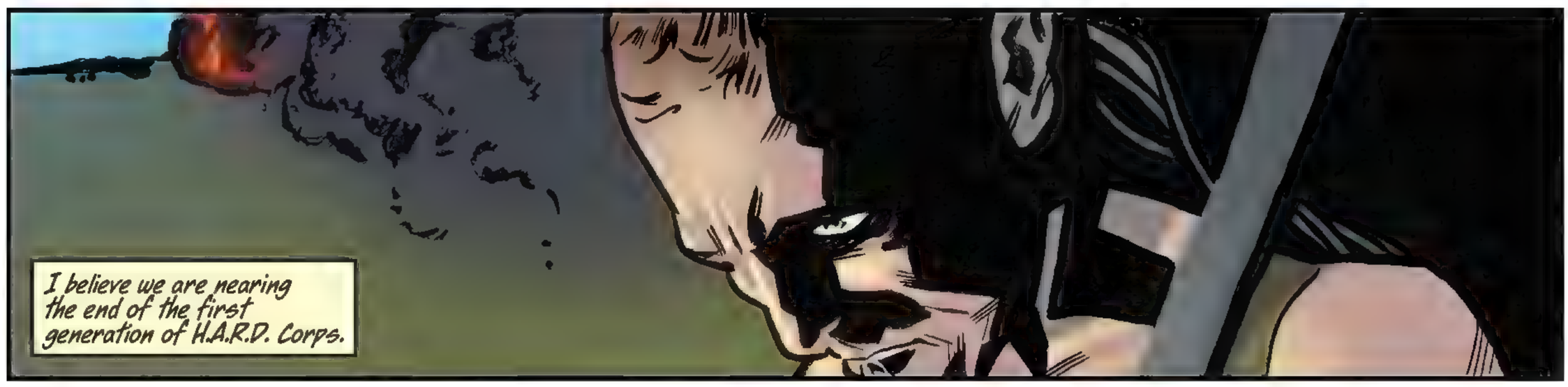
Given the rarity of subjects physically compatible with the H.A.R.D. Corps process, we cannot be sure that future personnel will be as steadfast as Samuel.

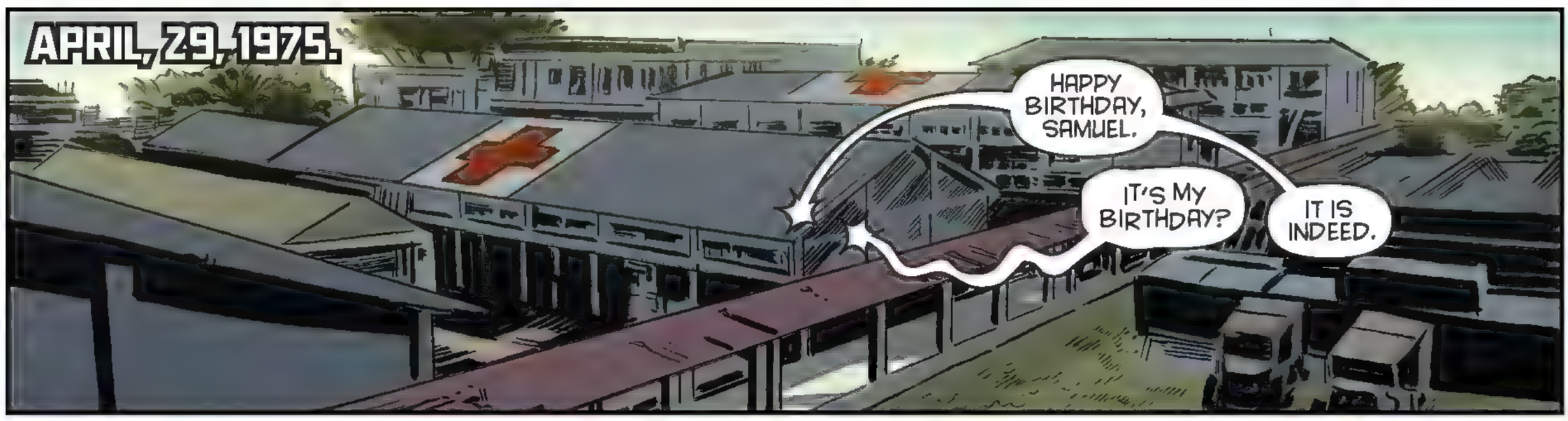
1973.
Camarillo is dead after suffering a massive aneurysm. It appears both our equipment and the subjects' brains are beginning to fail.
Given that our original estimates provided for a useful life of two years at most, P.R.S. can be quite pleased with this outcome.

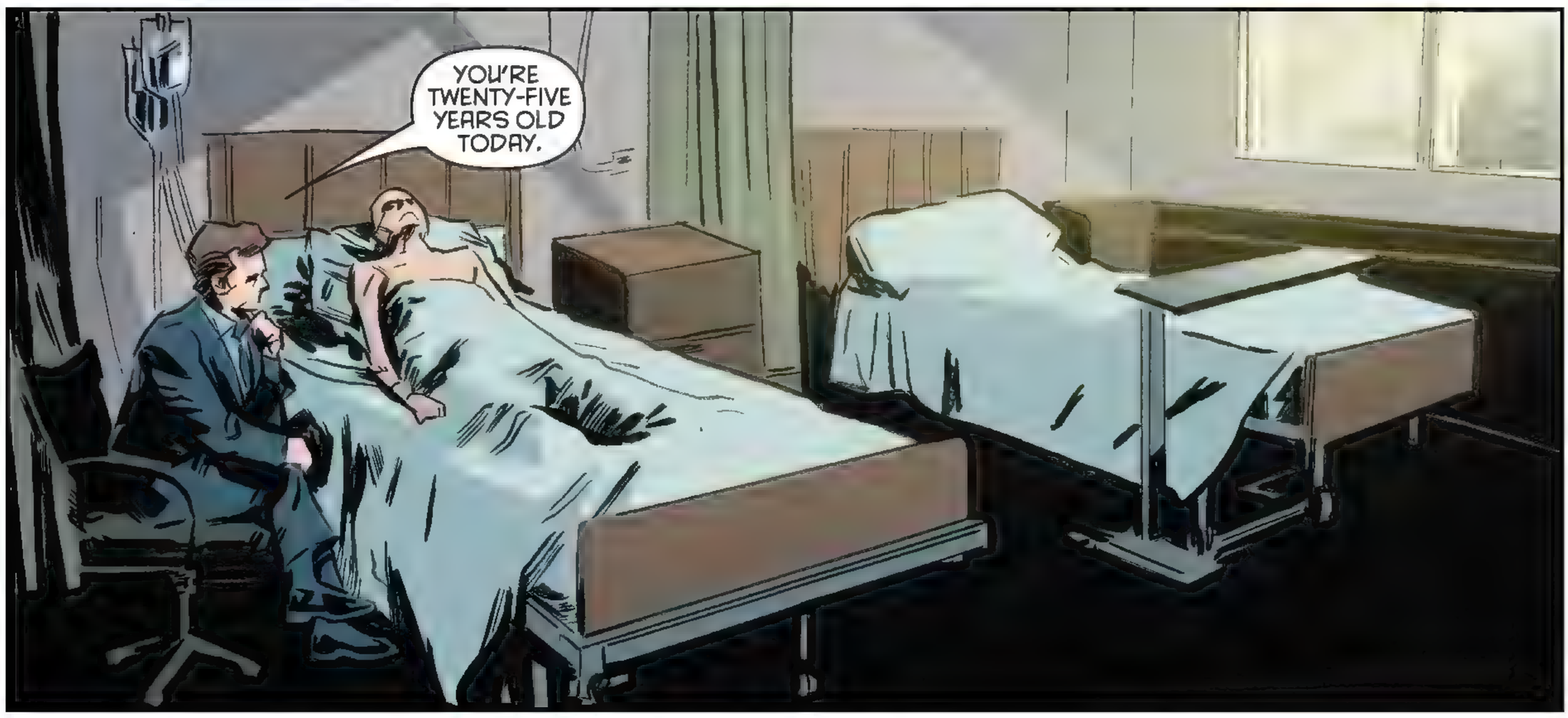
Today I overheard Samuel crying uncontrollably. This is most unlike him.


I had anticipated that mood swings could be among the side effects of the H.A.R.D. Corps implants. I will treat it with the appropriate drugs.

1974.
Samuel is no longer able to enter the field on foot. The weight of the equipment is too much in his current condition. We are making progress reducing its size for future operatives.
I am also seeing continued cognitive deterioration in Samuel--memory loss, confusion, etc.

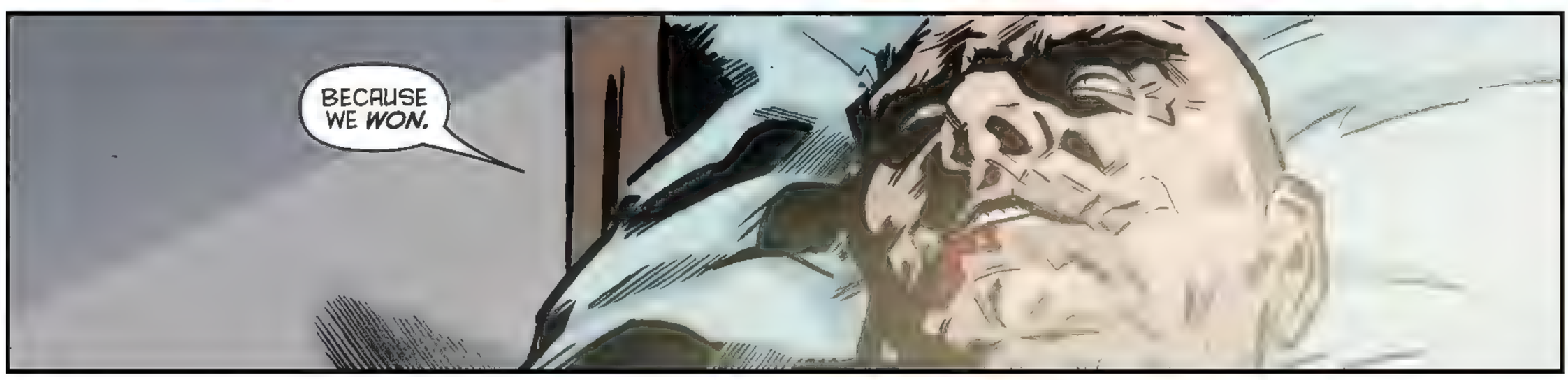

I believe we are nearing the end of the first generation of H.A.R.D. Corps.


APRIL, 29, 1975.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, SAMUEL.
IT'S MY BIRTHDAY?
IT IS INDEED.

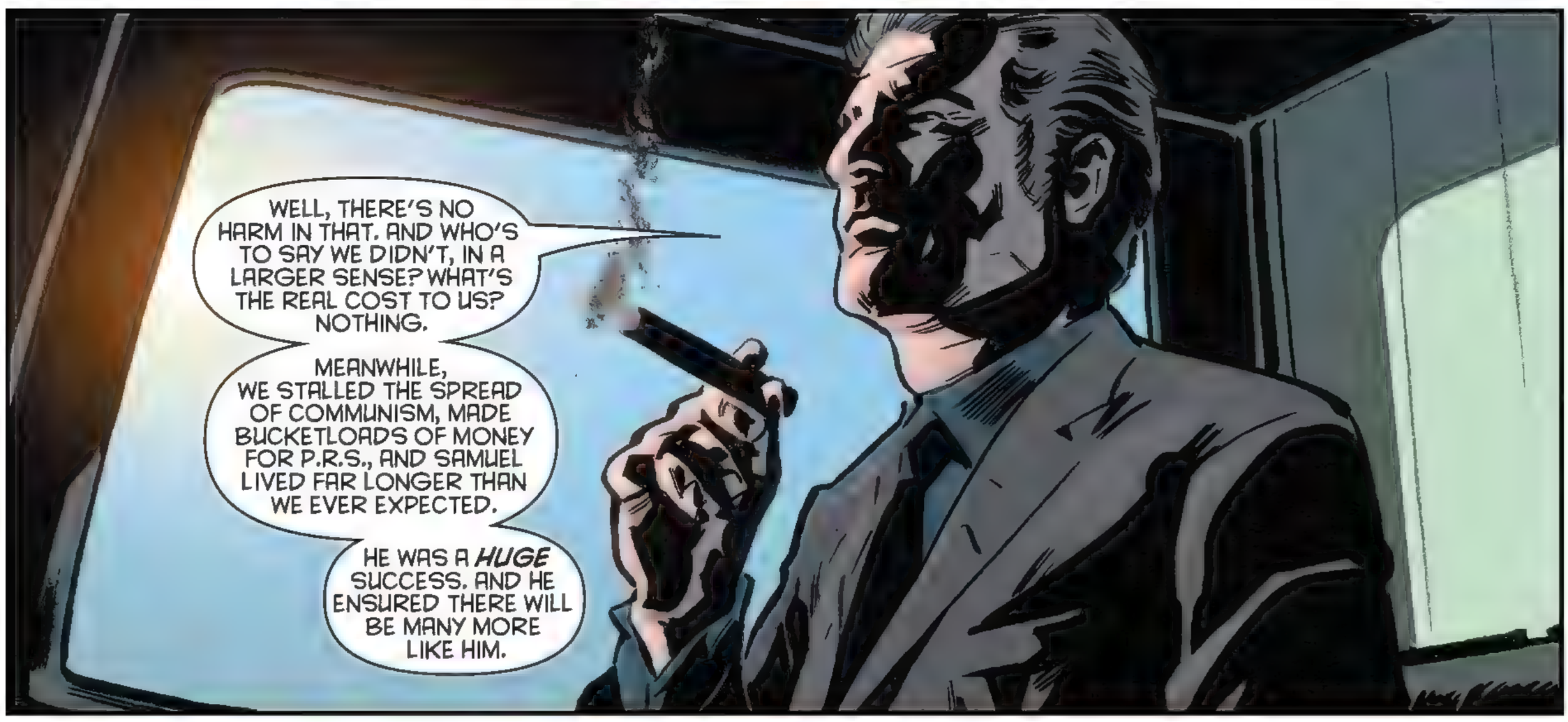

YOU'RE TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD TODAY.

SAMUEL... THIS ISN'T FOR THE REPORT. THIS IS FOR ME.
WAS IT... WAS IT WORTH IT?
-HHOCH-

IT'S BEEN... HARD. THE THINGS I'VE DONE... THINGS I STILL SEE, EVEN WITH THESE BLIND EYES...
BUT YES, ARTHUR. IT WAS WORTH IT.


BECAUSE WE *WON.*

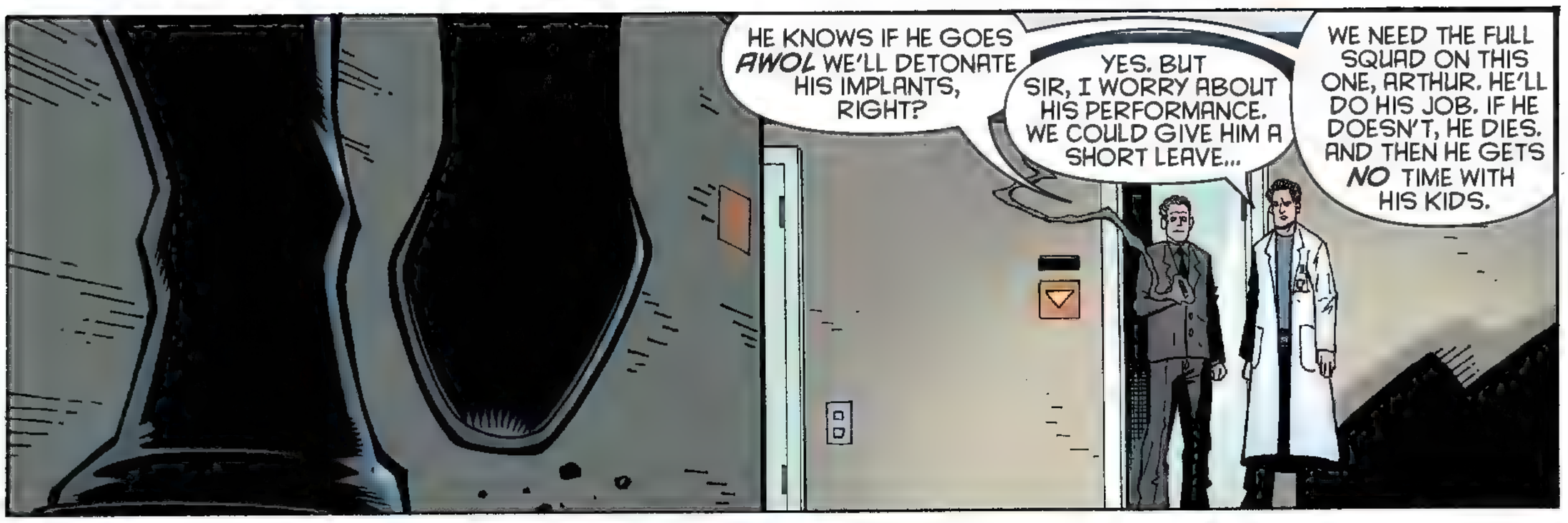
I'M GLAD HE WENT PEACEFULLY. WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME, BUT AFTER HIS SERVICE, I WOULD'VE HATED FOR THINGS TO GO THE OTHER WAY.
I TOLD HIM HIS BRAIN WOULD BE STUDIED. HELP FUTURE RECRUITS. HE SEEMED TO FIND COMFORT IN THAT.
MR. PRESCOTT... HE THOUGHT WE'D WON.

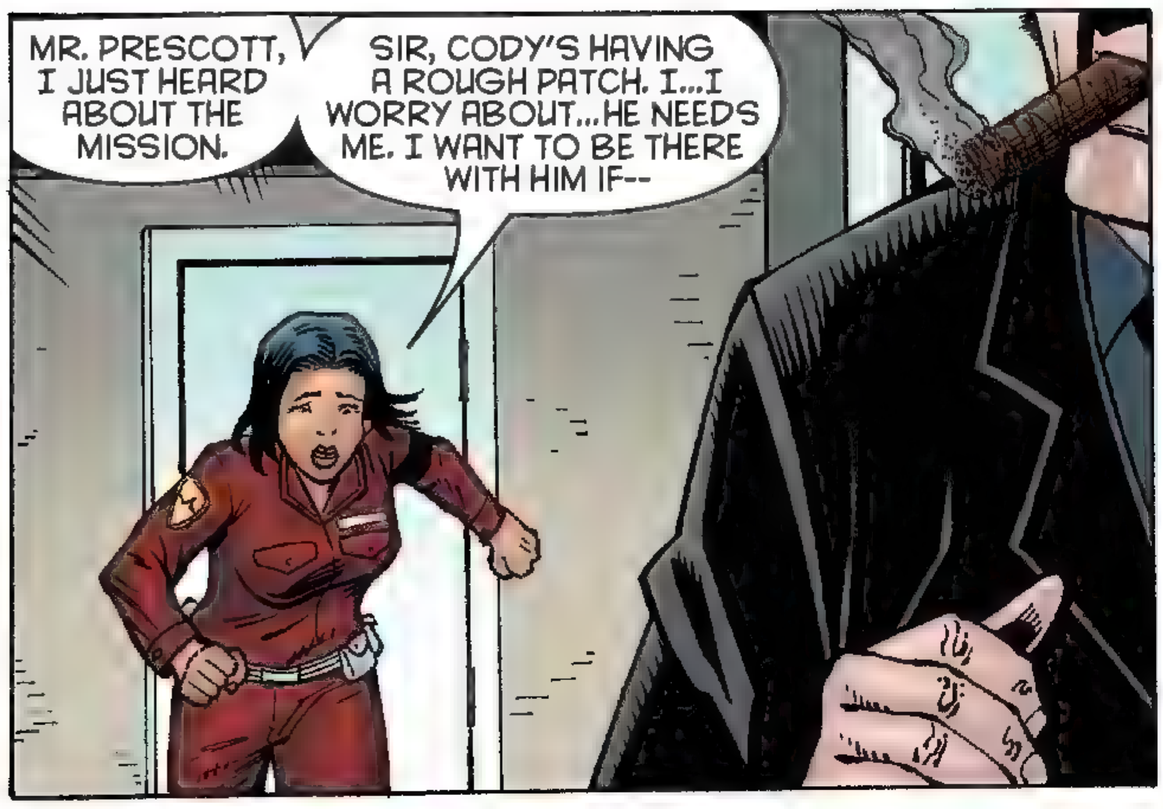

WELL, THERE'S NO HARM IN THAT. AND WHO'S TO SAY WE DIDN'T, IN A LARGER SENSE? WHAT'S THE REAL COST TO US? NOTHING.
MEANWHILE, WE STALLED THE SPREAD OF COMMUNISM, MADE BUCKETLOADS OF MONEY FOR P.R.S., AND SAMUEL LIVED FAR LONGER THAN WE EVER EXPECTED.
HE WAS A *HUGE* SUCCESS. AND HE ENSURED THERE WILL BE MANY MORE LIKE HIM.

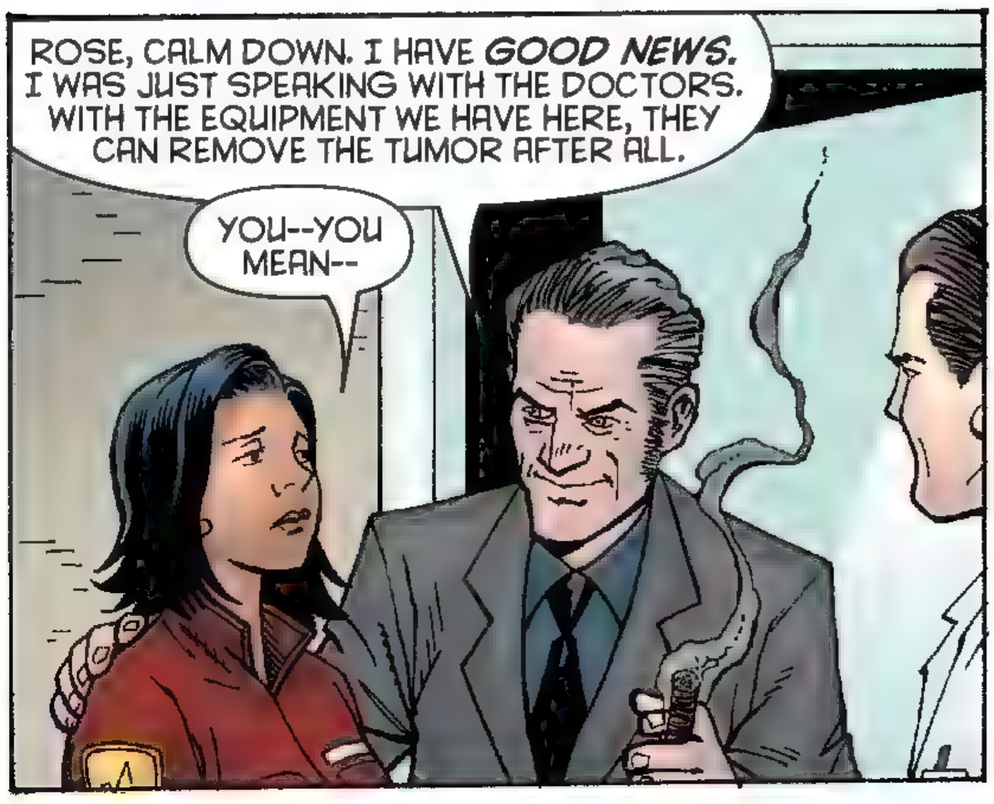
THAT'S A BIG WIN IN MY BOOK.

1985. FORT WORTH, TEXAS.
DI? IS HE--
ASLEEP. DON'T WAKE HIM.
HE MADE AN ERROR. DROPPED AN EASY OUT. COULD'VE USED YOUR SUPPORT.
I'M SORRY. I... THINGS GOT CRAZY AT WORK--
I KNOW, GARRETT. I'VE HEARD IT A HUNDRED TIMES.
DO YOU THINK I *WANT* IT TO BE LIKE THIS? NEVER SEEING MY KIDS, NEVER SEEING YOU?
THINK WHERE WE WERE FIVE YEARS AGO! MY JOB IS WHAT GOT US OUT OF THAT NEIGHBORHOOD, GOT THE KIDS INTO THOSE SCHOOLS, GOT YOU THAT DEGREE--
OKAY! YES! AND WE'RE DOING *GREAT* NOW!
WE COULD LIVE ON MY SALARY ALONE, GARRETT. AT LEAST FOR A WHILE.
YOUR KIDS NEED THEIR FATHER. I NEED MY HUSBAND. IF YOU REALLY MEAN THESE THINGS YOU ALWAYS SAY, *QUIT!*
I-- I--
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. I...I CAN'T--
CAN'T TALK ABOUT IT. I KNOW.
GOOD NIGHT, GARRETT.

PROJECT RISING SPIRIT RESEARCH FACILITY DELTA.
ROSE? IS YOUR BOY--
THEY'RE MOVING HIM ON BASE. THE FACILITIES ARE BETTER. AND HE'S WORSE.
I HOPE IT'S THE RIGHT THING. MY FOLKS CAN'T VISIT HIM HERE...
BUT YOU CAN. MOST IMPORTANT THING TO A BOY IS HIS MOTHER. TAKE IT FROM A MAMA'S BOY WHO'S RAISING A MAMA'S BOY.
THANKS, GARRETT. SORRY I'M SO--YOU KNOW. HOW'S THINGS WITH YOU?
I'M ABOUT TO FIND OUT.
C.E.O. PRESCOTT'S OFFICE.
RESIGN? THIS IS H.A.R.D. CORPS, MR. DUPREE. THERE IS NO "RESIGN."
WHAT MR. PRESCOTT MEANS IS THE IMPLANTS HAVE ALREADY CAUSED HUGE CHANGES TO YOUR BRAIN.
EVEN IF YOU NEVER USED THEM AGAIN, YOUR LIFE EXPECTANCY WOULD INCREASE BY A YEAR AT MOST.
HE KNOWS WHAT I MEAN, ARTHUR.
THEN THAT'S A YEAR I'D HAVE WITH MY FAMILY! PLEASE... I KNOW WHAT I SIGNED UP FOR. I KNOW WHAT I GOT. AND I'M THANKFUL. TRULY.
BUT I CAN FEEL MY MIND STARTING TO GO. AND I'VE SERVED FIVE YEARS. DONE EVERYTHING YOU ASKED.
THE LIFE I ALWAYS DREAMED OF IS HERE. AND I'M GOING TO MISS IT. PLEASE... JUST LET ME HAVE A SMALL PIECE.
YOU HAVE THIRTY MILLION DOLLARS' WORTH OF OUR PROPERTY IN YOUR HEAD, MR. DUPREE. IT CANNOT BE REUSED.
ARE YOU ABLE TO PAY THAT BACK?


HE KNOWS IF HE GOES AWOL WE'LL DETONATE HIS IMPLANTS, RIGHT?
YES. BUT SIR, I WORRY ABOUT HIS PERFORMANCE. WE COULD GIVE HIM A SHORT LEAVE...
WE NEED THE FULL SQUAD ON THIS ONE, ARTHUR. HE'LL DO HIS JOB. IF HE DOESN'T, HE DIES. AND THEN HE GETS NO TIME WITH HIS KIDS.


MR. PRESCOTT, I JUST HEARD ABOUT THE MISSION.
SIR, CODY'S HAVING A ROUGH PATCH. I...I WORRY ABOUT...HE NEEDS ME. I WANT TO BE THERE WITH HIM IF--


ROSE, CALM DOWN. I HAVE GOOD NEWS. I WAS JUST SPEAKING WITH THE DOCTORS. WITH THE EQUIPMENT WE HAVE HERE, THEY CAN REMOVE THE TUMOR AFTER ALL.
YOU--YOU MEAN--

I DON'T WANT TO MAKE ANY PROMISES. BUT WHEN YOU GET BACK FROM THE MISSION, HE SHOULD JUST BE WAKING UP...AND THINGS WILL LOOK A LOT BETTER.

WE NEED THE FULL SQUAD, ARTHUR..
THERE'S A LOT RIDING ON THIS MISSION.

"IT WILL BE A SUCCESS."

AGH!

--THIS CLOSE. AN INCH TO THE LEFT...

CODY! PLEASE, SOMEONE TAKE ME TO--

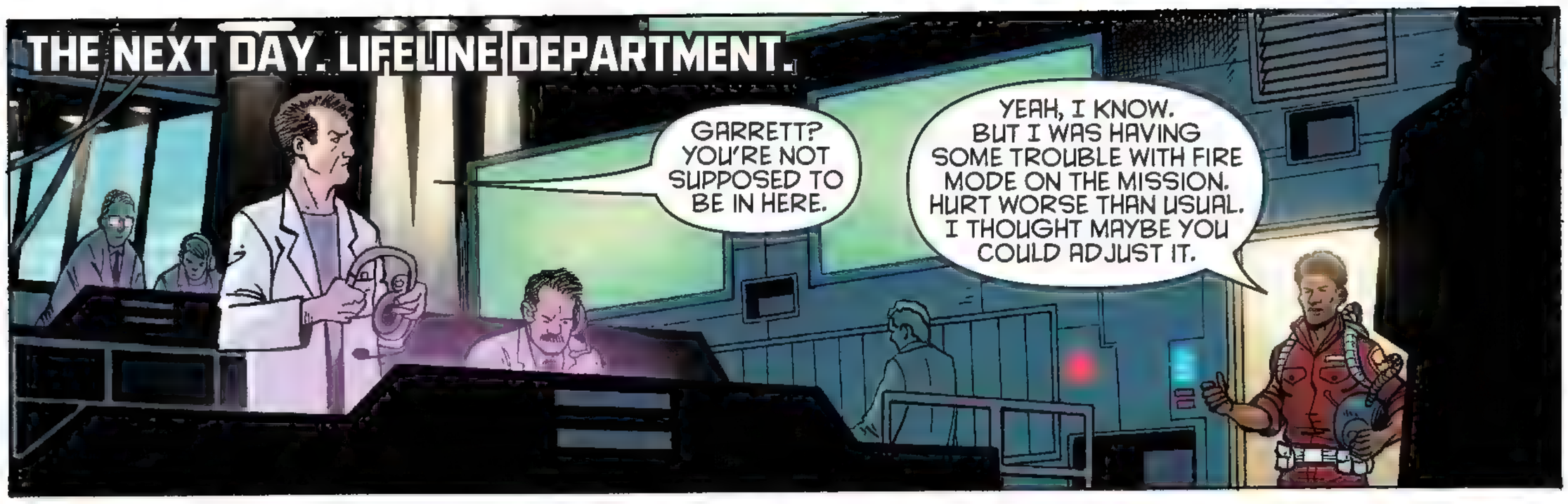
ROSE, WAIT. I HAVE TO TELL YOU--THE TUMOR WAS BIGGER THAN WE THOUGHT. THERE WERE... COMPLICATIONS.

WHAT KIND? IS HE--

WE LOST HIM, ROSE.

THERE'S NOTHING THAT COULD'VE BEEN DONE.

I'M SO SORRY.


THE NEXT DAY. LIFELINE DEPARTMENT.
GARRETT? YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE IN HERE.
YEAH, I KNOW. BUT I WAS HAVING SOME TROUBLE WITH FIRE MODE ON THE MISSION. HURT WORSE THAN USUAL. I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU COULD ADJUST IT.

REALLY? JUST FIRE? THAT'S ODD.
HANG ON, I'LL DOWNLOAD IT. TELL ME EXACTLY WHAT--

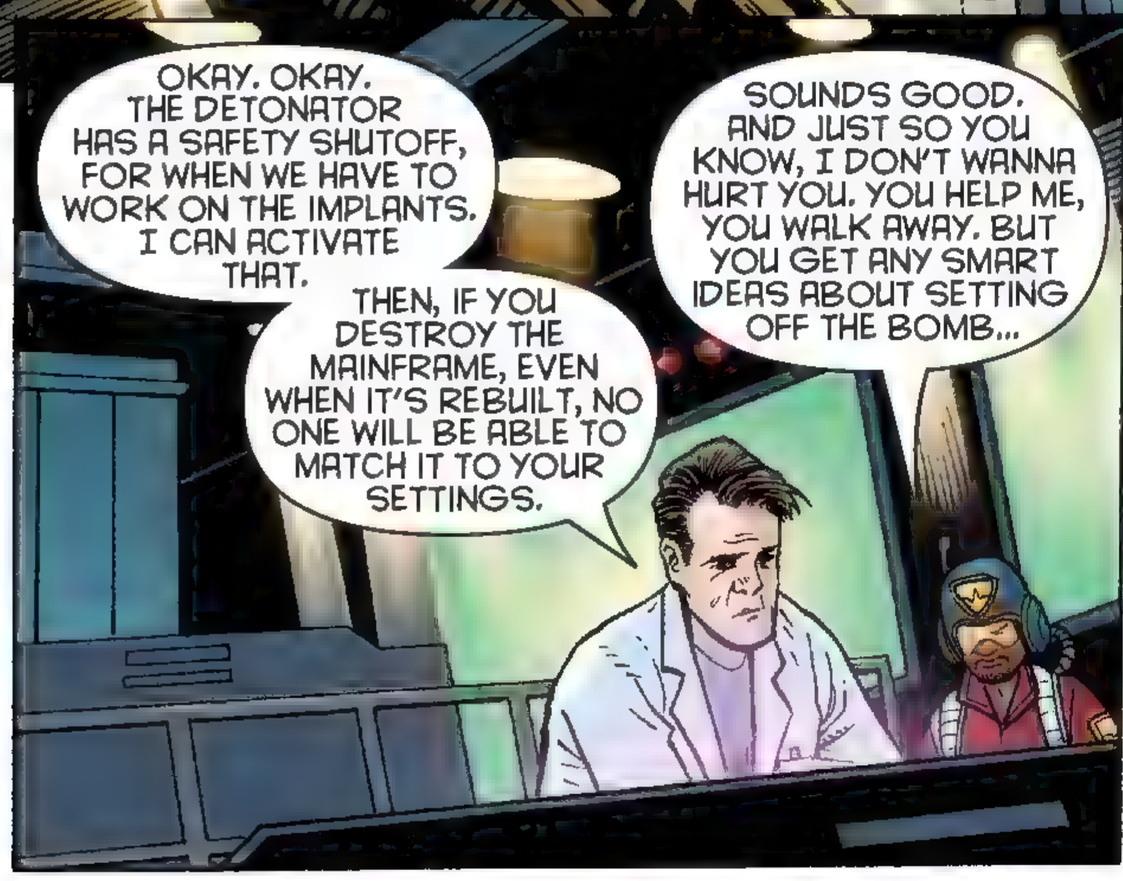
FWOOOOOSH
GHAAIIEE!

HUH. WORKS FINE NOW. JUST ONE OF THOSE COMPLICATIONS, I GUESS...LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO ROSE'S KID.
NICE SETUP YOU'VE GOT HERE. REMINDS ME OF THOSE APPLE COMPUTERS. REAL *USER-FRIENDLY.*
ROSE, THIS IS GARRETT. DOWNLOADING ARC CHARGE. YOU STILL UP FOR THIS?

SORRY.
COULDN'T HEAR YOU OVER ALL THE SCREAMING.

"SHE WANTS TO *DIE.*

"AND SHE WANTS TO TAKE A WHOLE MESS OF P.R.S. BASTARDS WITH HER."



ARTHUR? THAT OPERATION ON CODY... IT NEVER HAD A CHANCE, DID IT?
I... ANY SURGERY HAS A RISK OF...
NO, ROSE. IT DIDN'T. I'M SORRY.

THERE. NOW YOU JUST HAVE TO DESTROY THE MACHINERY. C-CAN I AT LEAST GET BEHIND YOU?
SURE. MIGHT WANNA COVER YOUR FACE.

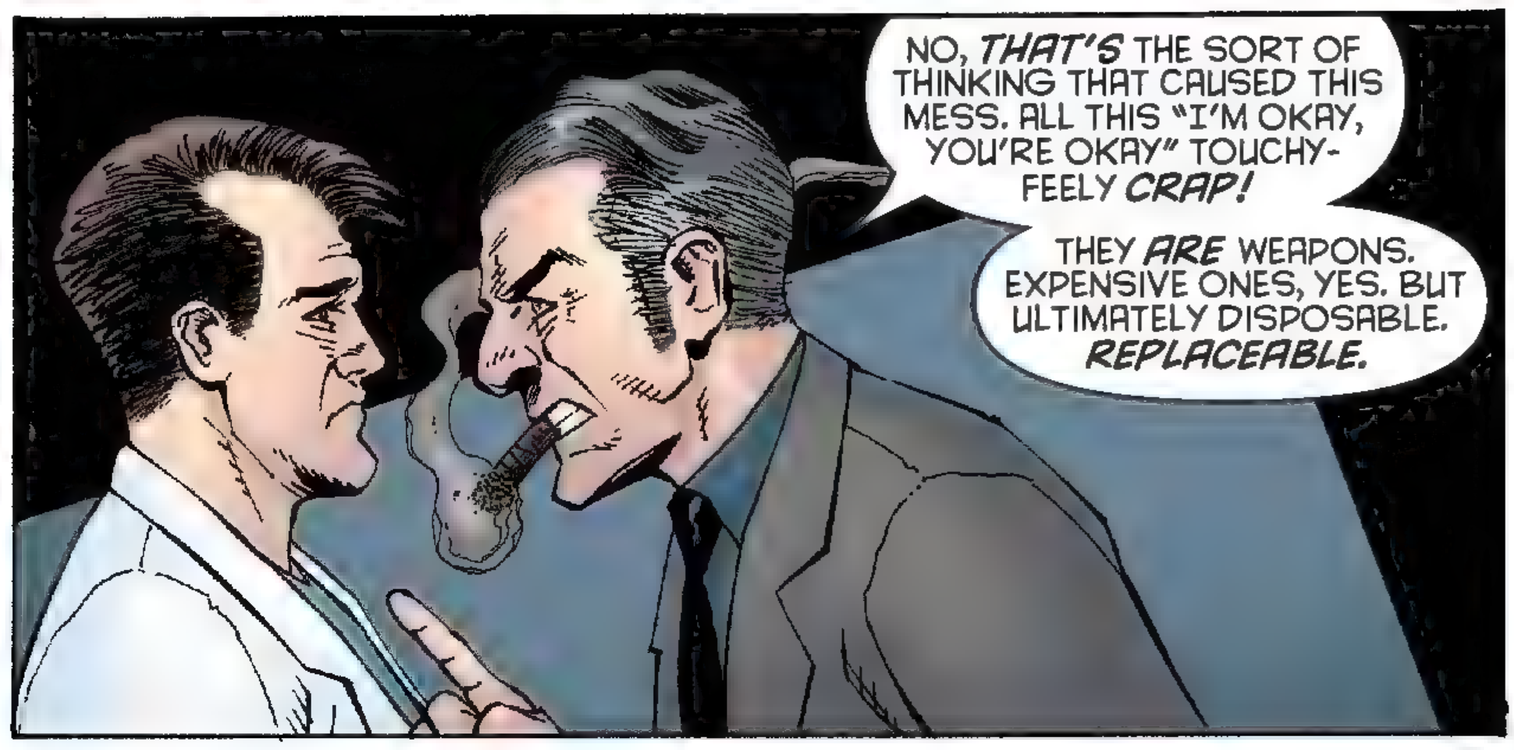
OH, YOU SON OF A--

ROSE, I REALLY AM SORRY.
IT'S OKAY, ARTHUR. I KNEW HOW THIS WAS GOING TO GO, EVEN IF GARRETT DIDN'T. I JUST WISH I COULD'VE REACHED PRESCOTT. BUT I THINK I MADE MY POINT.
I HOPE THEY TREAT YOU BETTER BECAUSE OF THIS. I HOPE THEY TREAT EVERYONE BETTER.

ME TOO.
TEK

TWO DAYS LATER.
MORE PERSONAL CONTACT WITH LIFELINE. GOOD IDEA. IF THEY LIKE YOU, THEY'RE LESS LIKELY TO WANT TO KILL YOU.
YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS ARE FINE, ARTHUR. I'VE GOT A FEW OF MY OWN. MORE THAN ONE TRIGGER SOURCE FOR IMPLANT DETONATION. SMALLER EXPLOSIONS.
AND MOST IMPORTANTLY...WE CAN NEVER GIVE UP OUR LEVERAGE ON THESE PEOPLE. AS THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE, WE NEED TO FIND NEW METHODS OF CONTROL.

THAT'S WHAT YOU GOT FROM THIS?
MR. PRESCOTT, THAT KIND OF THINKING INVITED THIS SITUATION. THESE AREN'T WEAPONS, THEY'RE PEOPLE. WE HAVE TO TREAT THEM AS SUCH.


NO, THAT'S THE SORT OF THINKING THAT CAUSED THIS MESS. ALL THIS "I'M OKAY, YOU'RE OKAY" TOUCHY-FEELY CRAP!
THEY ARE WEAPONS. EXPENSIVE ONES, YES. BUT ULTIMATELY DISPOSABLE. REPLACEABLE.

THE SOLE PURPOSE OF H.A.R.D. CORPS PERSONNEL--ALL PERSONNEL--IS TO BE USEFUL TO H.A.R.D. CORPS. IF THEY'RE NOT...THEY HAVE NO REASON TO EXIST.
DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?

PERFECTLY.
SIR.

1993.

"YOU KNOW, IF WE GET CAUGHT..."

...WE'LL PROBABLY BOTH LOSE OUR JOBS.

NAH. PRESCOTT LOVES TO REMIND ME I'VE GOT FIFTY MILLION WORTH OF HIS PROPERTY IN MY HEAD. I'M TOO *EXPENSIVE* TO FIRE. AND YOU'RE TOO CUTE, CAROL.

CHARLIE, DON'T TRY TO COMPLIMENT PEOPLE. YOU'RE TERRIBLE AT IT. JUST SIT THERE AND LOOK RUGGEDLY HANDSOME, OKAY?

I'D BETTER GET BACK BEFORE ARTHUR MISSES ME.

OH! ARTHUR, I WAS JUST--

THERE'S A BRIEFING. RATHER IMPORTANT, I THINK. ALL LIFELINE PERSONNEL EXPECTED.

H.A.R.D. CORPS WILL BE BRIEFED EN ROUTE. PLEASE LET MAJOR PALMER KNOW THEY'RE SCRAMBLING.

DON'T WORRY, MS. JARDINE. I'M THE ONE WHO ENCOURAGED CLOSER TIES BETWEEN LIFELINE AND THE FIELD AGENTS.

FIND HAPPINESS WHERE YOU CAN. IT NEVER LASTS LONG AROUND HERE.

YOU ALL KNOW CODENAME *TRACKER* IS ON LOAN TO DELTA FORCE IN SOMALIA. THEY JUST LAUNCHED AN OP TO CAPTURE SEVERAL TIER-ONE TARGETS.
AT 16:20 LOCAL TIME, A BLACK HAWK HELICOPTER CARRYING TRACKER AND FOUR RANGERS WAS SHOT DOWN.
I PITY ANYONE WHO GETS BETWEEN US AND THEM.
AT EASE, HAMMERHEAD. THE ARMY'S GOT PEOPLE ON RETRIEVAL. WE HAVE A *BIGGER* PROBLEM.
TRACKER SUFFERED A TRAUMATIC HEAD INJURY IN THE CRASH. IT AFFECTED HIS MIND...AND HIS IMPLANTS. HIS CRANIAL DETONATOR'S DISABLED. AND SOMEHOW--
--HE CAN NOW ACCESS *ALL THE POWERS HE'S EVER DOWNLOADED.*
THIS WILL KILL HIM IN A MATTER OF HOURS. TIME WE DON'T HAVE.
HE'S WANDERED AWAY FROM THE CRASH SITE. AND HE'S *MURDERING* EVERYTHING HE SEES. ENEMY, CIVILIANS, U.S. MILITARY...IF IT STANDS, HE'S MOWING IT DOWN.
I DON'T NEED TO TELL YOU THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES IF WORD OF THIS GETS OUT.
SIR, IF IT'S AS BAD AS YOU SAY, I'M NOT CERTAIN THE FOUR OF US CAN BOTH CONTAIN THE SITUATION *AND* NEUTRALIZE TRACKER.
YOU WON'T HAVE TO. WE'RE THROWING ALL OUR BIG GUNS AT THIS.
H.A.R.D. CORPS, MEET OUR NUMBER ONE PROBLEM SOLVER.
HE'S THE CULMINATION OF OUR TECHNOLOGY. AND HE'S IMPOSSIBLE TO KILL.
HIS NAME'S *BLOODSHOT.*
NOW *GO FIX THIS.*

IT'S LIKE *HELL* OUT HERE.

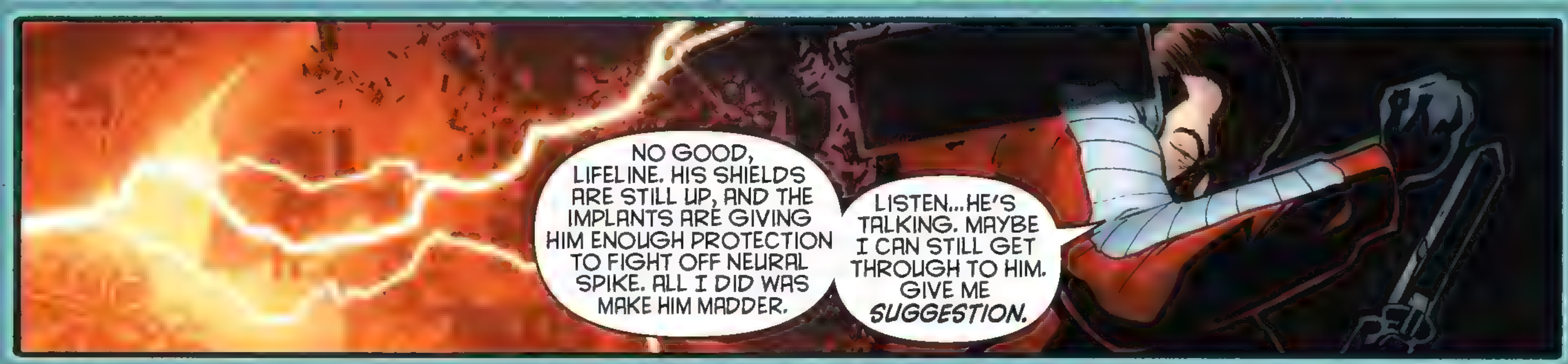
I KNOW. TRACKER'S GOT HIS SHIELDS UP. BLOODSHOT CAN'T GET TO HIM. THE WIND'S DISPERSING GAS ATTACKS TOO QUICKLY TO BE EFFECTIVE.

WE NEED TO TRY SOMETHING ELSE. TAKE COVER... I'M GOING TO REMOVE YOUR SHIELDS AND GIVE YOU ***NEURAL SPIKE.***

HNN!
GOT IT. ACTIVATING NEURAL SPIKE...

...NOW.
RRRECCCCCCCCCC

BASTARDS! OUT OF MY HEAD! IT'S MY BRAIN! I'LL BURN YOU ALL OUT!
GHNAH!


NO GOOD, LIFELINE. HIS SHIELDS ARE STILL UP, AND THE IMPLANTS ARE GIVING HIM ENOUGH PROTECTION TO FIGHT OFF NEURAL SPIKE. ALL I DID WAS MAKE HIM MADDER.
LISTEN...HE'S TALKING. MAYBE I CAN STILL GET THROUGH TO HIM. GIVE ME SUGGESTION.

CHARLIE, NO! YOU'LL BE DEFENSELESS--
PALMER, THIS IS ARTHUR. REQUEST APPROVED. DOWNLOADING SUGGESTION MODE.

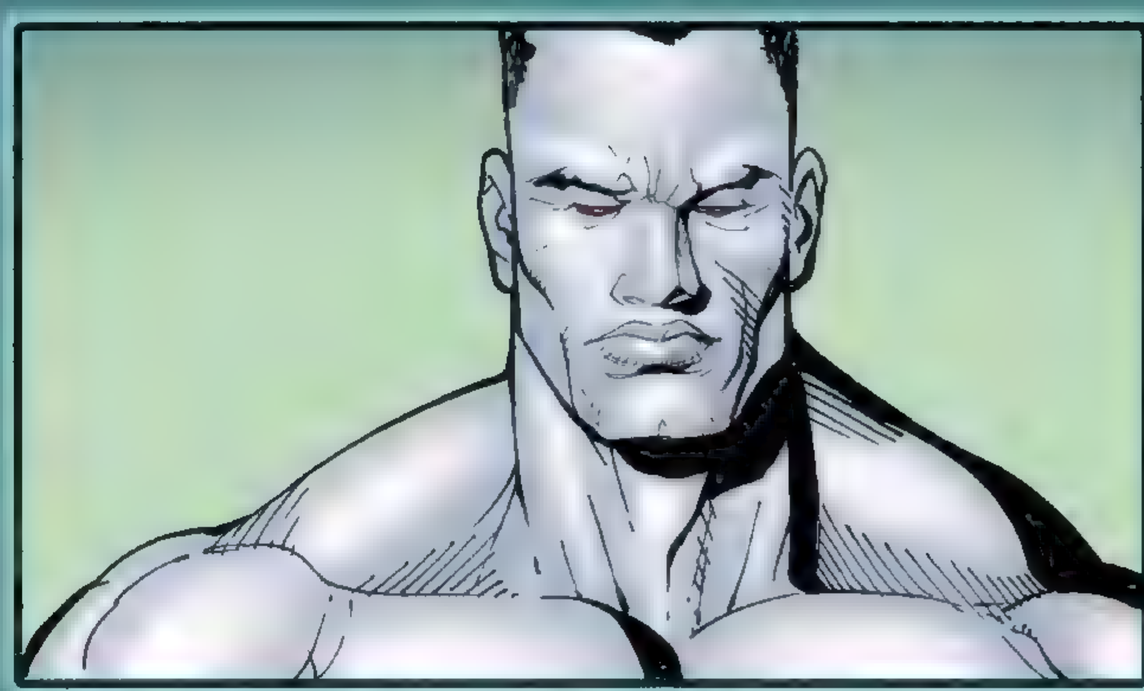
GOOD LUCK.

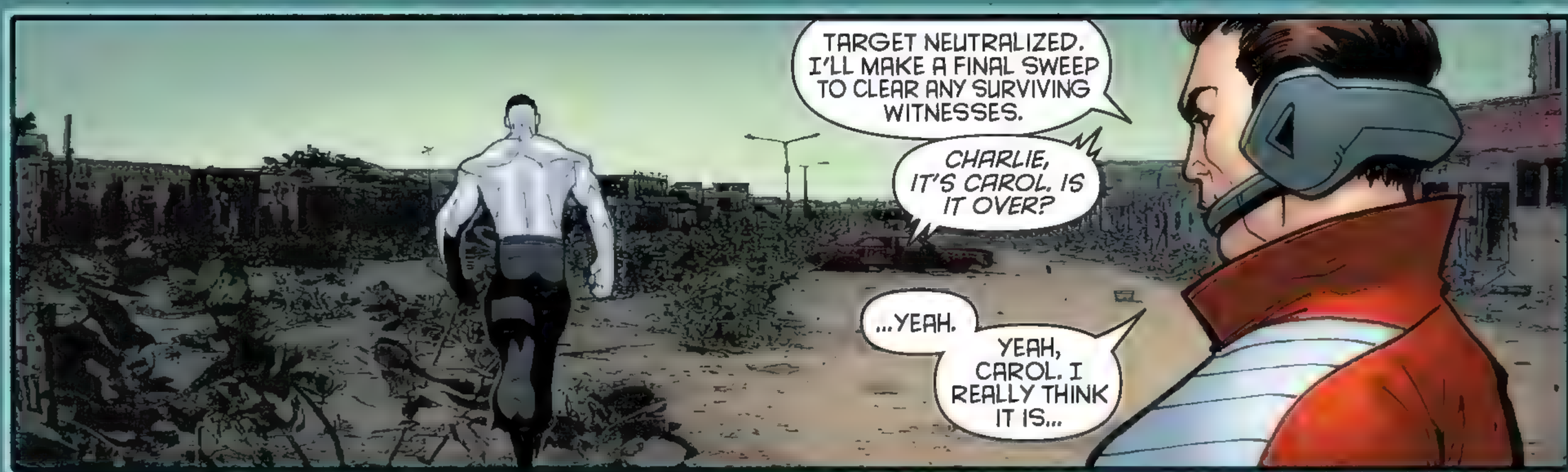
TRACKER, IT'S ME. CHARLIE PALMER.

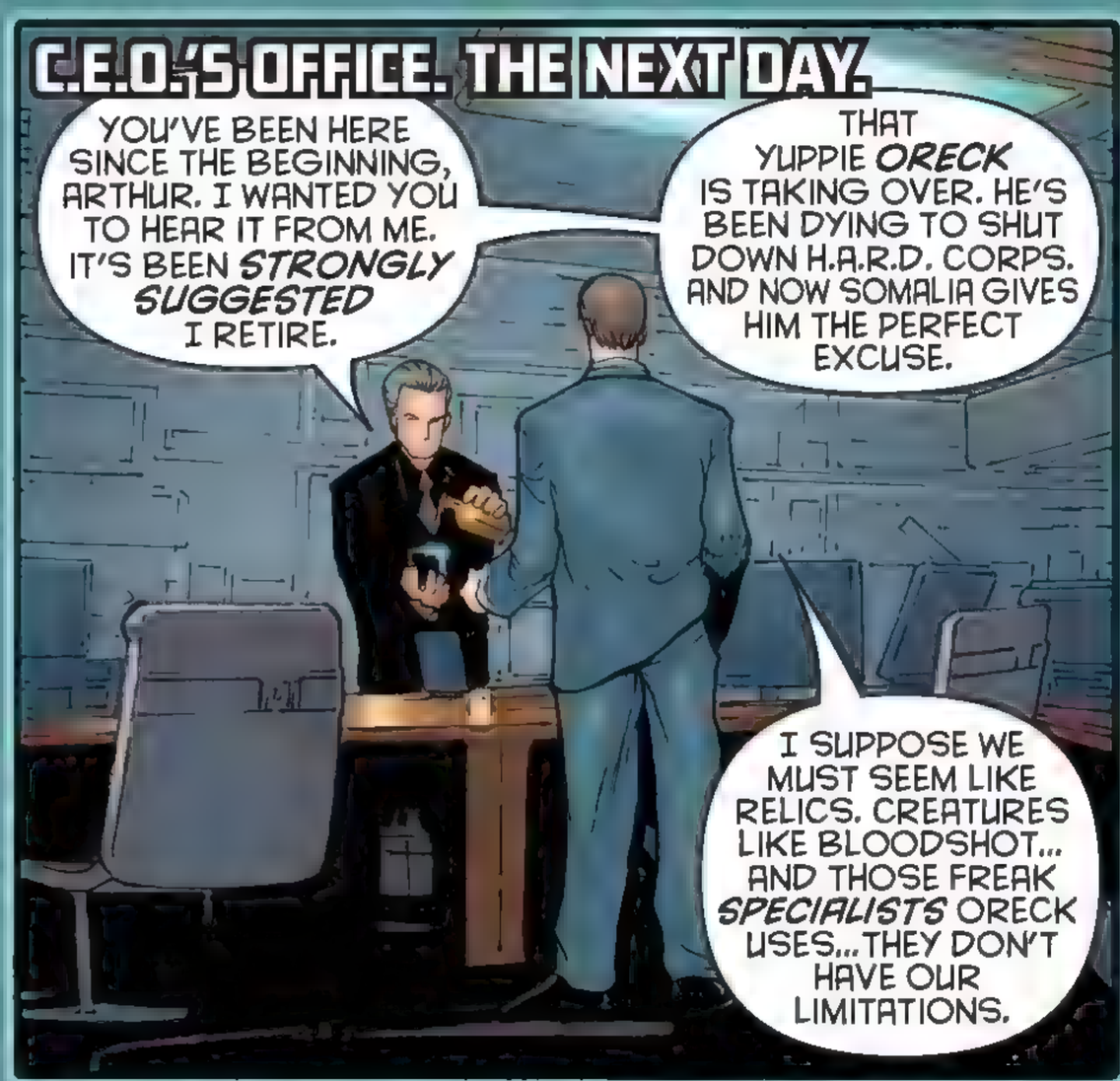
CH-CHARLIE? IS THAT YOU, MAJOR?
EVAC'S HERE, PAL. DROP YOUR SHIELD SO WE CAN TREAT YOUR WOUNDS.

CHARLIE, THIS HEADACHE...IT HURTS SO BAD. I CAN HARDLY SEE.
CAN YOU GIVE ME SOMETHING FOR MY *HEAD?*
I--I...LIFELINE, THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING WE CAN DO FOR--

KRAK




TARGET NEUTRALIZED. I'LL MAKE A FINAL SWEEP TO CLEAR ANY SURVIVING WITNESSES.
CHARLIE, IT'S CAROL. IS IT OVER?
...YEAH.
YEAH, CAROL. I REALLY THINK IT IS...


C.E.O.'S OFFICE. THE NEXT DAY.
YOU'VE BEEN HERE SINCE THE BEGINNING, ARTHUR. I WANTED YOU TO HEAR IT FROM ME. IT'S BEEN *STRONGLY SUGGESTED* I RETIRE.
THAT YUPPIE *ORECK* IS TAKING OVER. HE'S BEEN DYING TO SHUT DOWN H.A.R.D. CORPS. AND NOW SOMALIA GIVES HIM THE PERFECT EXCUSE.
I SUPPOSE WE MUST SEEM LIKE RELICS. CREATURES LIKE BLOODSHOT... AND THOSE FREAK *SPECIALISTS* ORECK USES...THEY DON'T HAVE OUR LIMITATIONS.

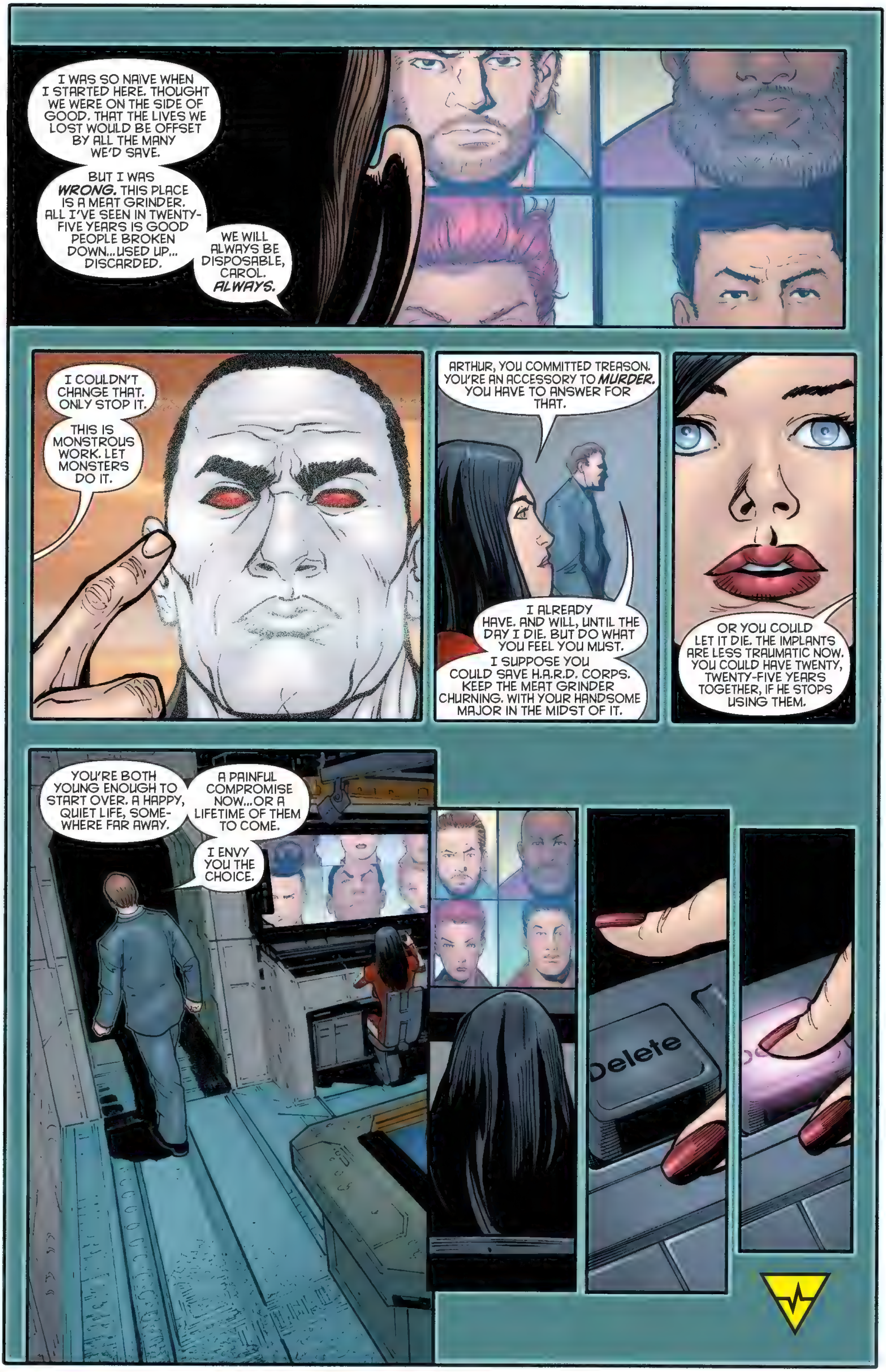
THAT'S THE *POINT,* DAMN IT. I ALWAYS THOUGHT WE NEEDED *OUR KIND* LOOKING OUT FOR US. THAT THE *HUMAN FACTOR* WAS IMPORTANT.
SO DID I. BUT IT SEEMS THAT VIEW IS OUTDATED. OR MAYBE WE WERE DELUDING OURSELVES, AND IT NEVER REALLY EXISTED IN THE FIRST PLACE.
MAYBE, AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE'RE ALL COGS IN A MACHINE WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE IS TO KEEP ITSELF RUNNING.

NOT ANYMORE. THEY'LL KEEP YOU AROUND 'TIL THE INVESTIGATION'S FINISHED, BUT THEY'LL PUSH YOU OUT TOO. NEW LEADERS ALWAYS CLEAN HOUSE.
I'M SORRY IT HAD TO END THIS WAY, ARTHUR.
SO AM I, SIR...SO AM I.

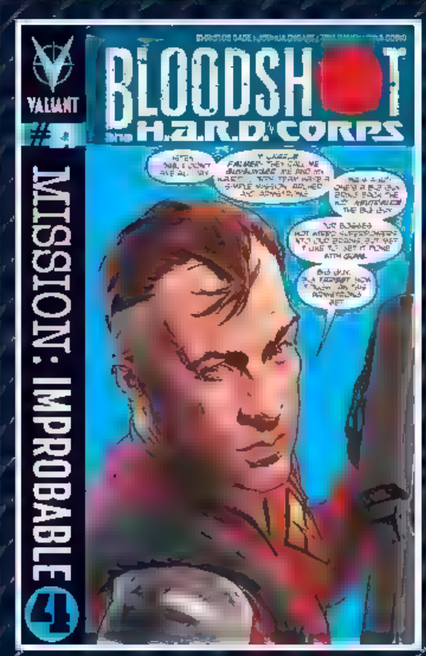
LIFELINE COMMAND CENTER.
CAROL? YOU SHOULD HAVE GONE HOME HOURS AGO.
I KNOW. BUT I JUST COULDN'T UNDERSTAND IT. WHY DAMAGE TO THE IMPLANTS WOULD HAVE THAT EFFECT. THE CHANCES ARE *INFINITESIMAL.*
I HAD TO FIND OUT HOW IT HAPPENED. SO I COMPILED AND CROSS-REFERENCED ALL THE DATA RECORDS.

YOU DIDN'T CAUSE THE CRASH. BUT YOU TOOK ADVANTAGE OF IT. YOU'D BEEN WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT...FOR *YEARS.*
IT'S ALL HERE. SUBTLE TWEAKS, TESTS, NEURAL ADJUSTMENTS--IN ALL OF THEM. NO ONE ELSE COULD'VE DONE THIS. IT *HAD* TO BE YOU.

OF COURSE IT WAS.


I WAS SO NAÏVE WHEN I STARTED HERE. THOUGHT WE WERE ON THE SIDE OF GOOD. THAT THE LIVES WE LOST WOULD BE OFFSET BY ALL THE MANY WE'D SAVE.
BUT I WAS *WRONG.* THIS PLACE IS A MEAT GRINDER. ALL I'VE SEEN IN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IS GOOD PEOPLE BROKEN DOWN...USED UP... DISCARDED.
WE WILL ALWAYS BE DISPOSABLE, CAROL. *ALWAYS.*
I COULDN'T CHANGE THAT. ONLY STOP IT.
THIS IS MONSTROUS WORK. LET MONSTERS DO IT.
ARTHUR, YOU COMMITTED TREASON. YOU'RE AN ACCESSORY TO *MURDER.* YOU HAVE TO ANSWER FOR THAT.
I ALREADY HAVE. AND WILL, UNTIL THE DAY I DIE. BUT DO WHAT YOU FEEL YOU MUST.
I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAVE H.A.R.D. CORPS. KEEP THE MEAT GRINDER CHURNING. WITH YOUR HANDSOME MAJOR IN THE MIDST OF IT.
OR YOU COULD LET IT DIE. THE IMPLANTS ARE LESS TRAUMATIC NOW. YOU COULD HAVE TWENTY, TWENTY-FIVE YEARS TOGETHER, IF HE STOPS USING THEM.
YOU'RE BOTH YOUNG ENOUGH TO START OVER. A HAPPY, QUIET LIFE, SOME-WHERE FAR AWAY.
A PAINFUL COMPROMISE NOW...OR A LIFETIME OF THEM TO COME.
I ENVY YOU THE CHOICE.
Delete

MISSION: IMPROBABLE



FRED VAN LENTE · PERE PÉREZ · DAVID BARON

ARCHER & ARMSTRONG®

THEY CALL ME *BLOODSHOT.*

I'M LOOKING FOR THIS LITTLE *BRAT* AND HIS DRUNK, *MORBIDLY OBESE* SIDEKICK.

THEY DON'T *LOOK* LIKE MUCH, BUT THEY'RE *TROUBLE.*

IF YOU SEE 'EM, TELL 'EM I ALWAYS FINISH THE JOB.

AND THEY'RE THE JOB.

ARCHER & ARMSTRONG

OUR STORY SO FAR...

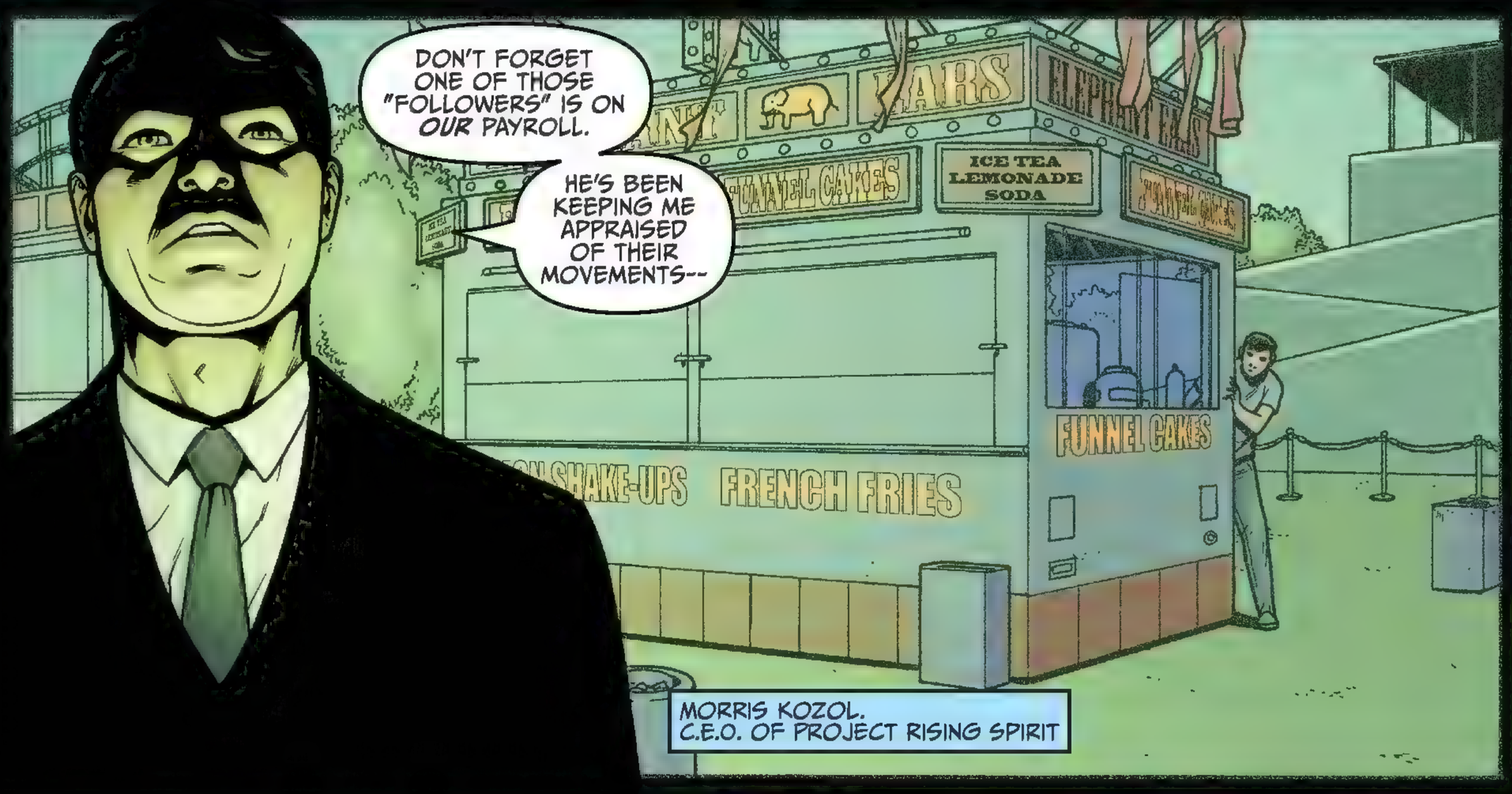
About ten thousand years ago the Anni-Padda Brothers—Ivar, Gilad, and Aram—stole an immensely powerful weapon called the Boon from a mysterious land known as the Faraway. Though they were successful in their thievery, it came at a tremendous price: the youngest of the brothers, Gilad, died during their journey. Driven to desperation by his brother's death, Ivar activated the Boon in hopes of a miracle. The resulting explosion not only devastated much of the ancient world, but also made Aram immortal, leaving him to wander the Earth for all of recorded history.

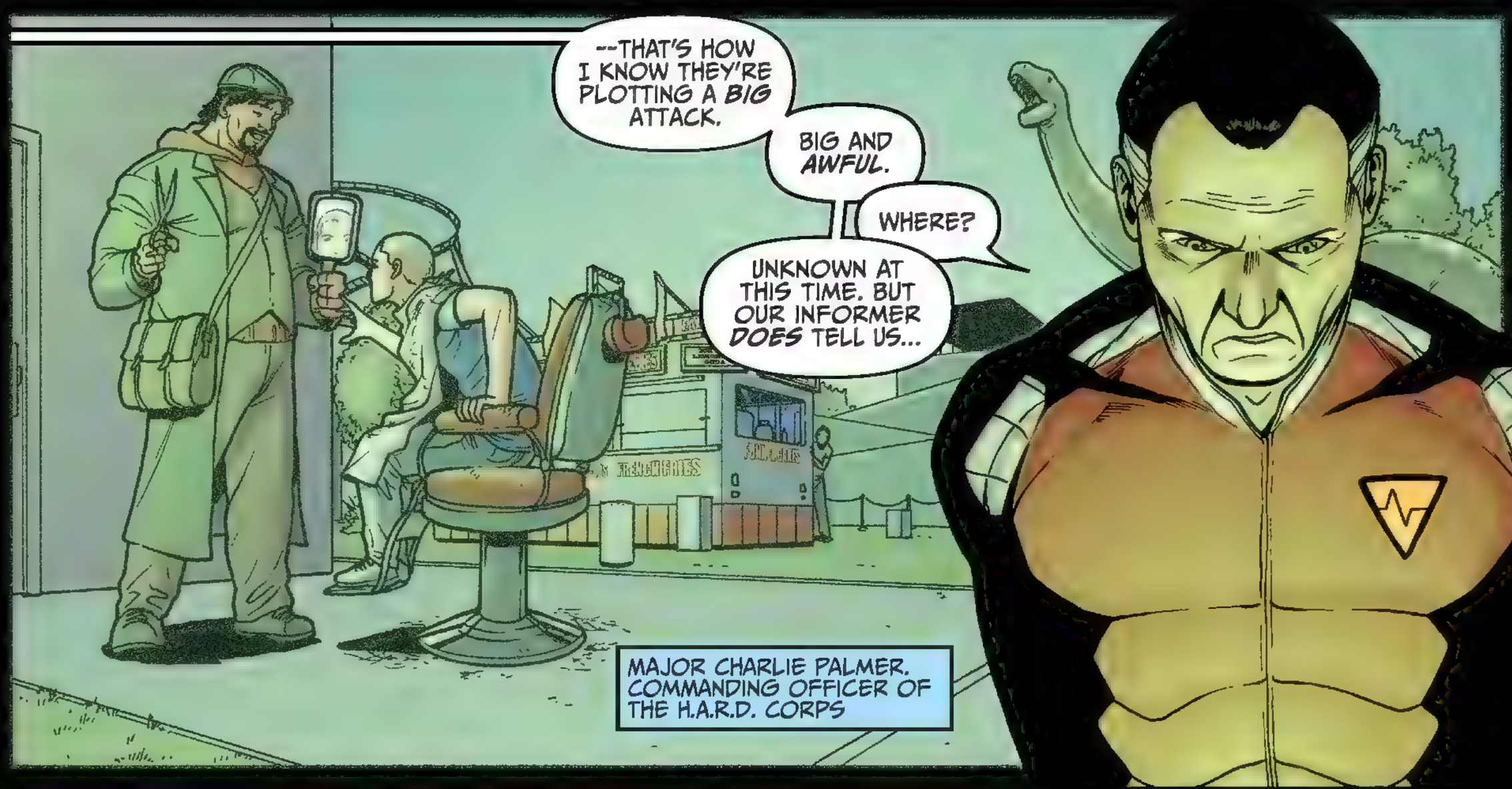
Enter youthful idealist Obadiah Archer. Unbeknownst to Obadiah, he was adopted and raised by an evil organization called the Sect. The Sect had one mission: kill Aram Anni-Padda (today known as Armstrong) and retrieve the Boon. To make a long story short, things did not go as planned. Archer eventually turned on his "parents," assisting Armstrong in destroying the Boon and forming an unlikely friendship with the drunken immortal in the process.

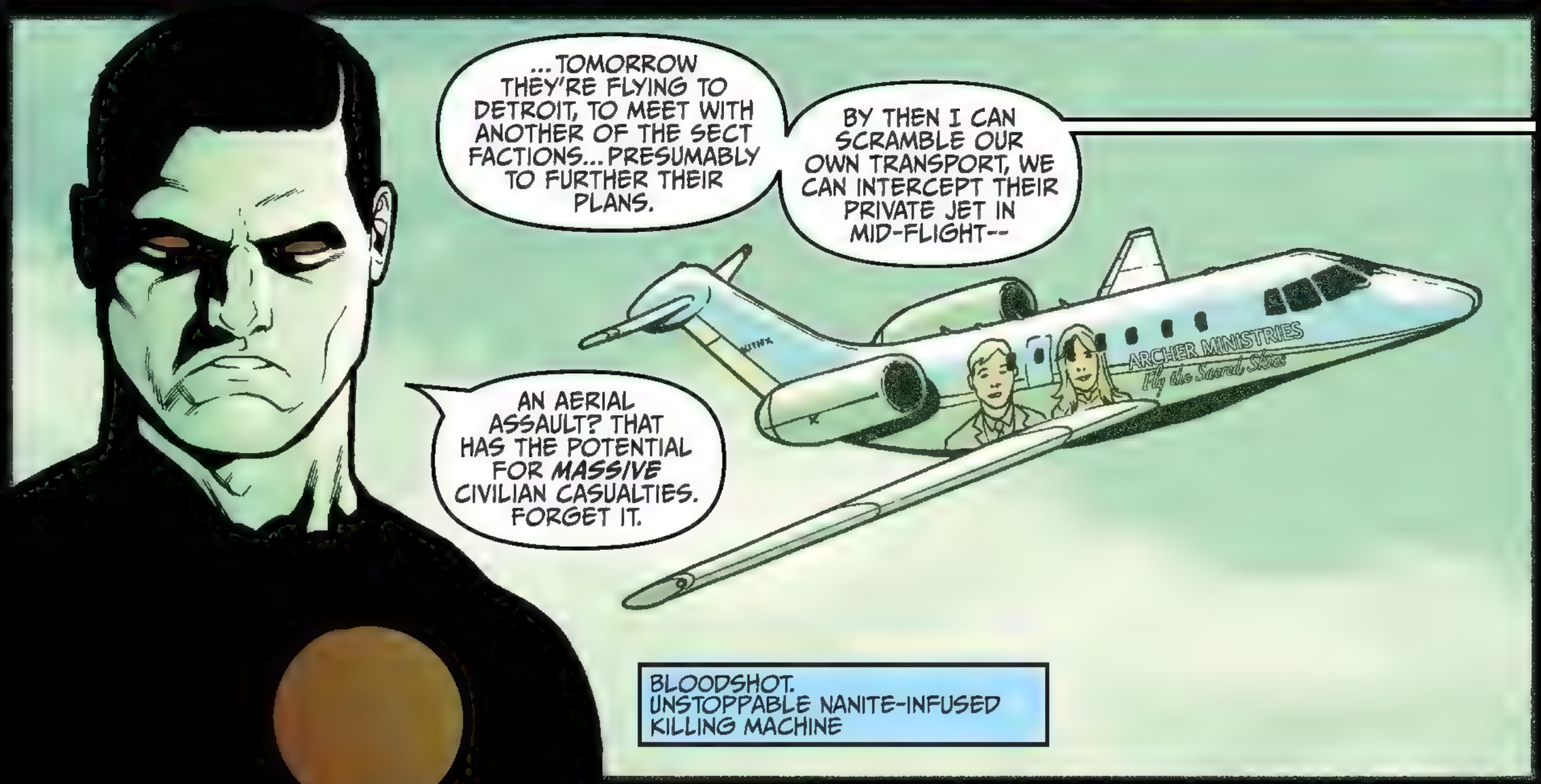
Fast forward! Now Archer and Armstrong have taken control of the Sect, and in doing so made some very deadly enemies, among which are Project Rising Spirit, whose elite division of super powered killers, The H.A.R.D Corps, have joined forces with the nanite-fueled super-killer known as Bloodshot. Bloodshot spent decades under the control of Project Rising Spirit, who used false memories to motivate Bloodshot to fulfill their top-secret missions. Now as Archer and Armstrong finish their plans for their new and improved Sect, they have landed themselves squarely in the crosshairs of BLOODSHOT AND THE H.A.R.D. CORPS!

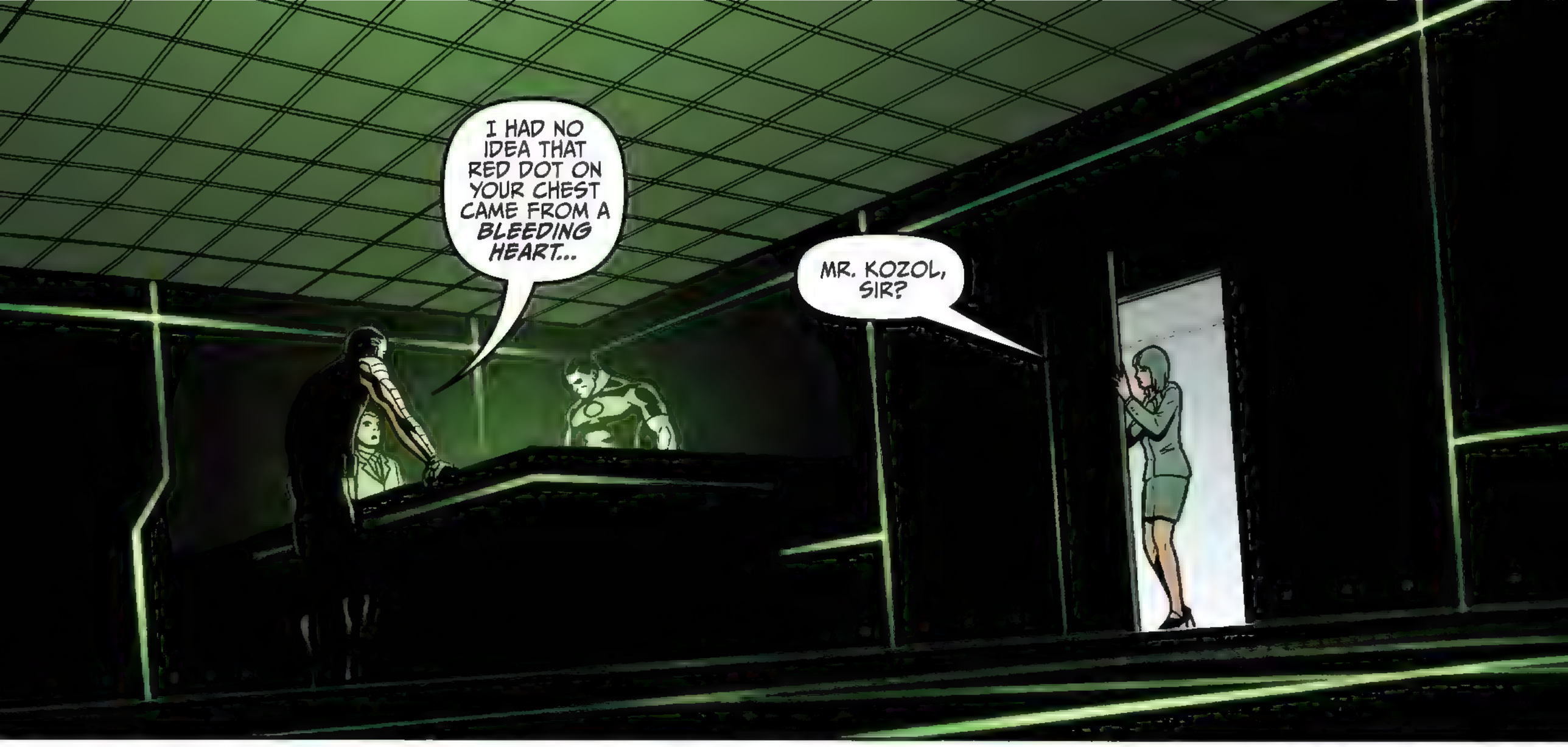
PROJECT RISING SPIRIT RESEARCH FACILITY THETA

NOW


DON'T FORGET ONE OF THOSE "FOLLOWERS" IS ON *OUR* PAYROLL.
HE'S BEEN KEEPING ME APPRAISED OF THEIR MOVEMENTS--
ICE TEA LEMONADE SODA
FUNNEL CAKES
FRENCH FRIES
MORRIS KOZOL. C.E.O. OF PROJECT RISING SPIRIT


--THAT'S HOW I KNOW THEY'RE PLOTTING A *BIG* ATTACK.
BIG AND *AWFUL*.
WHERE?
UNKNOWN AT THIS TIME. BUT OUR INFORMER *DOES* TELL US...
MAJOR CHARLIE PALMER. COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE H.A.R.D. CORPS


...TOMORROW THEY'RE FLYING TO DETROIT, TO MEET WITH ANOTHER OF THE SECT FACTIONS...PRESUMABLY TO FURTHER THEIR PLANS.
BY THEN I CAN SCRAMBLE OUR OWN TRANSPORT, WE CAN INTERCEPT THEIR PRIVATE JET IN MID-FLIGHT--
AN AERIAL ASSAULT? THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL FOR *MASSIVE* CIVILIAN CASUALTIES. FORGET IT.
ARCHER MINISTRIES
BLOODSHOT. UNSTOPPABLE NANITE-INFUSED KILLING MACHINE


I HAD NO IDEA THAT RED DOT ON YOUR CHEST CAME FROM A BLEEDING HEART...
MR. KOZOL, SIR?

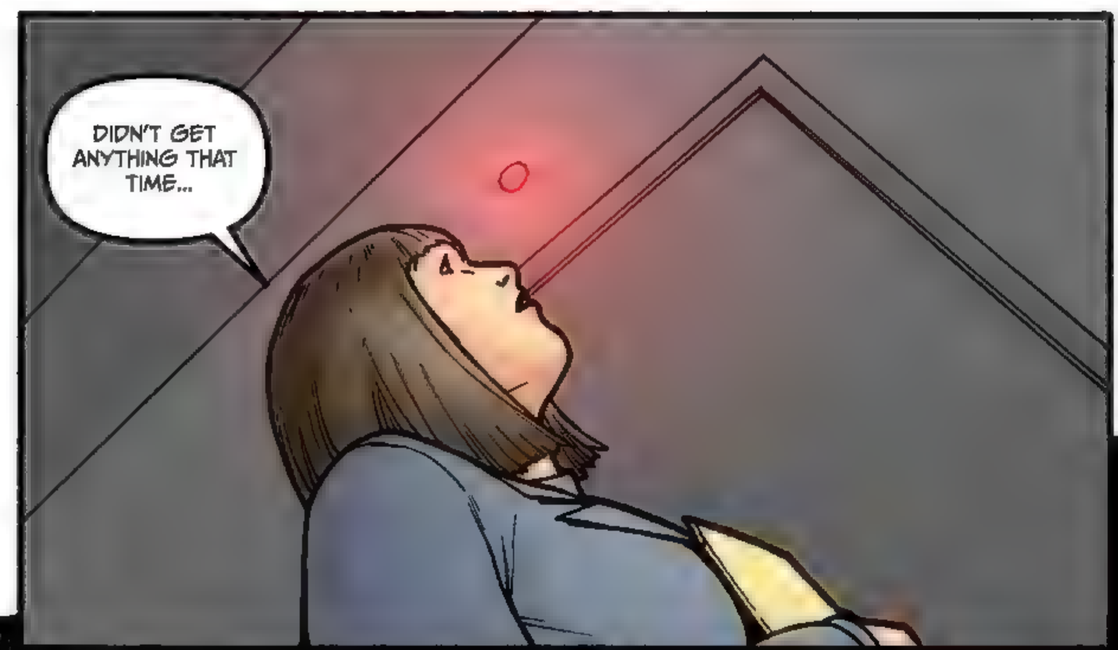
THE LAWYERS FOR THE OTHER SIDE CALLED, AND WANTED TO KNOW IF THE DEPOSITION FOR EPSTEIN...
...YOU KNOW, THE KID WHO, UH, EXPLODED...
...IF THAT COULD BE MOVED TO THREE.

SOMEBODY'S SUING YOU, KOZOL?
YOU KIDDING? IT'S P.R.S.
WHO ISN'T SUING HIM?

VERONICA.
THIS IS THE QUIET ROOM.
YOU SAW THE LIGHT ON OVER THE DOOR?

YES, BUT I THOUGHT--
DO NOT DO THAT. DO NOT THINK.
THIS IS MAJOR PALMER'S AND MY SECRET CLUBHOUSE. NO GIRLS ALLOWED, CAPISCE?

NOW GET OUT BEFORE YOU ACCIDENTALLY SEE SOMETHING THAT FORCES ME TO HAVE YOUR EYEBALLS REMOVED.
YES, SIR. SORRY, SIR.
YEAH, I HAVE NO IDEA WHY ANYONE WOULD WANT TO SUE THIS GUY.



WHERE WAS I? YEAH:

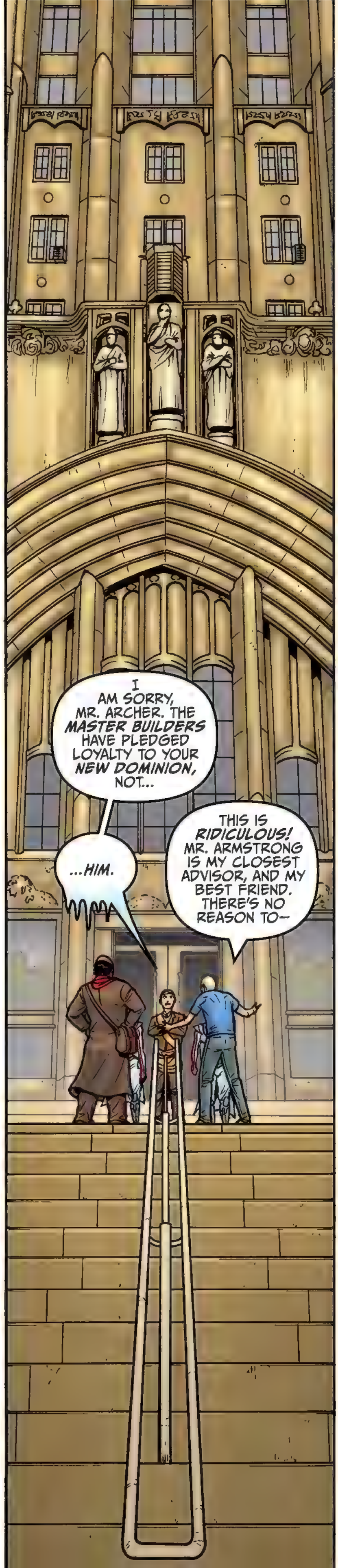
GOOFUS AND GALLANT'S FINAL DESTINATION LOOKS TO BE THE DETROIT ***MASONIC TEMPLE***, THE BIGGEST IN THE WORLD.

THIS COULD BE PROMISING. SHOW ME THE LAYOUT IF WE'VE GOT IT.

ALSO SATELLITE IMAGERY OF THE SURROUNDING AREA?

IT'S ***DETROIT***, SO THERE'S QUITE A BIT OF ***RUIN*** SURROUNDING THE BUILDING--

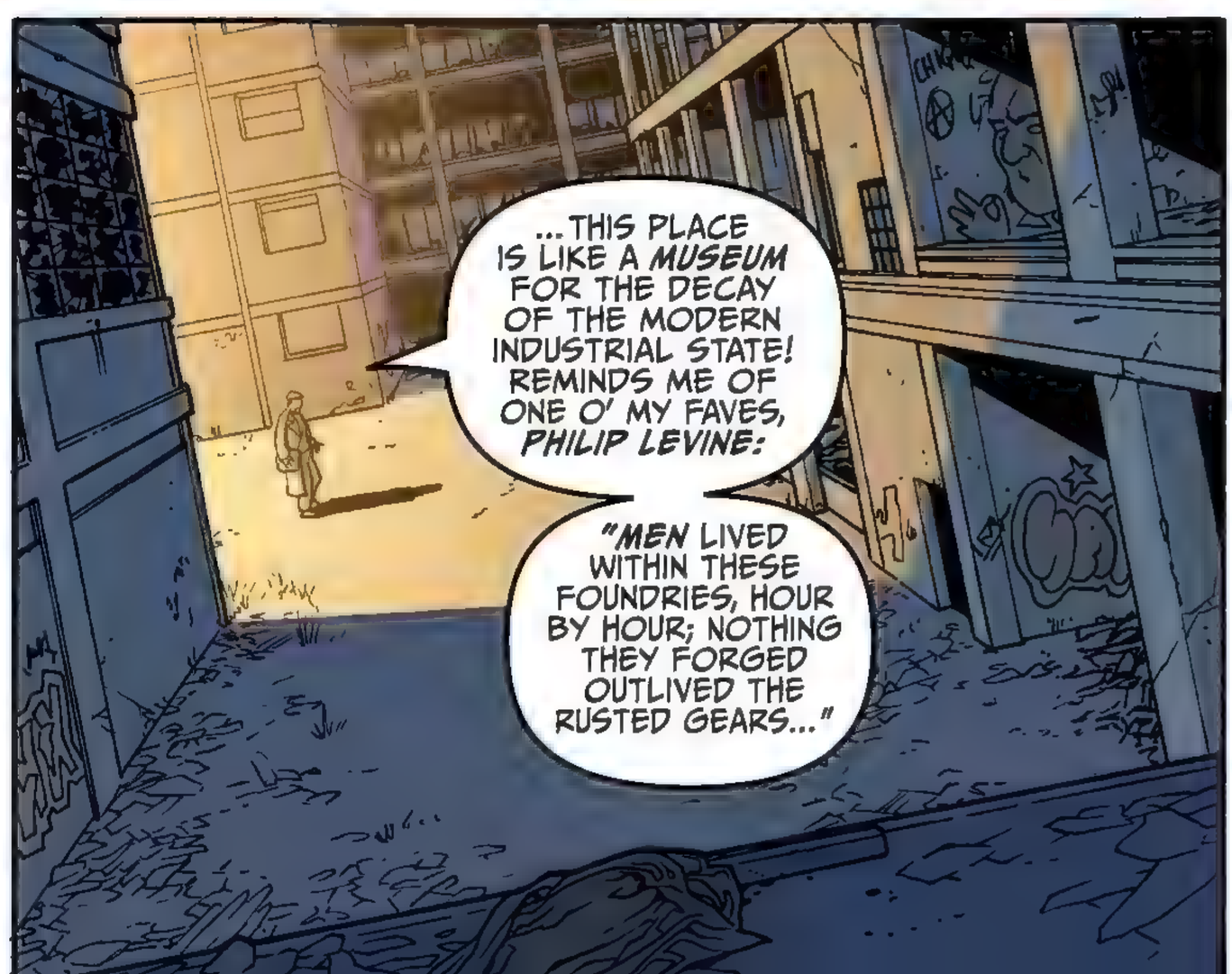
WAIT. ZOOM IN ON THAT BUILDING ON THE CORNER...

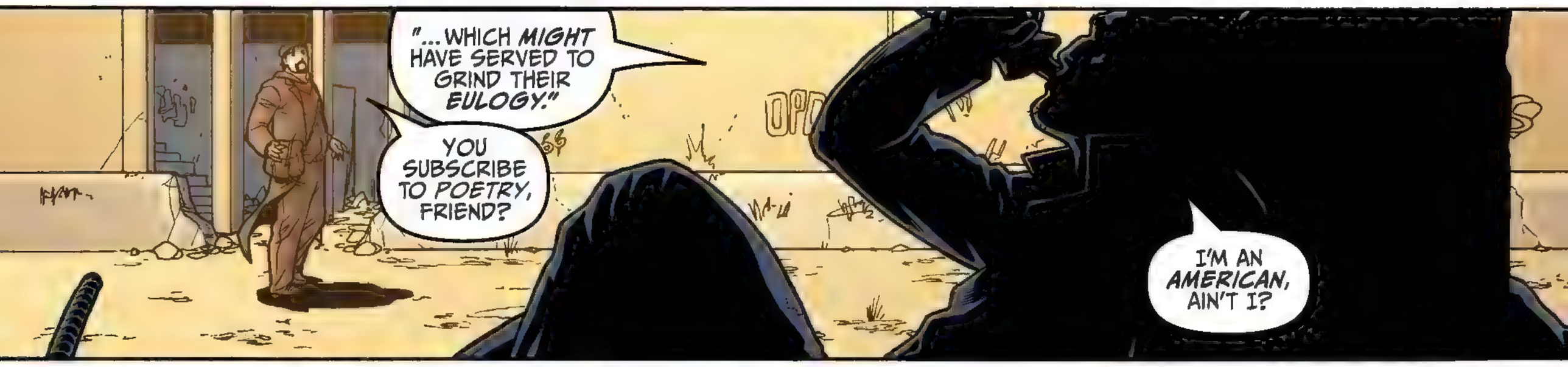

I AM SORRY, MR. ARCHER. THE *MASTER BUILDERS* HAVE PLEDGED LOYALTY TO YOUR *NEW DOMINION*, NOT...
...*HIM*.
THIS IS *RIDICULOUS!* MR. ARMSTRONG IS MY CLOSEST ADVISOR, AND MY BEST FRIEND. THERE'S NO REASON TO–

THIS SACRED TEMPLE HAS STOOD OVER A CENTURY--
--AND WE SHALL NOT *DEFILE* IT BY ALLOWING *HE-WHO-IS-NOT-TO-BE-NAMED* ENTRANCE.
THAT'S ALL SUPERSTITIOUS *BULLCORN*--

YO, YO. ARCHER. IT'S COOL, KID. *STUPID*, BUT COOL.
I DON'T WANT YOUR FIRST ACT AS A GRAND SECT POOBAH TO GET RUINED BY ME.
I'D GO *NARCOLEPTIC* SITTING THROUGH ALL THE HANDSHAKES OF THE SECRET GRAND ORDER OF THE WATER BUFFALO, ANYWAY.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, I CAN AMUSE MYSELF! I'LL SWING BACK IN A COUPLE HOURS...
IF...IF YOU'RE SURE, MR. ARMSTRONG...
SURE I'M SURE!


...THIS PLACE IS LIKE A *MUSEUM* FOR THE DECAY OF THE MODERN INDUSTRIAL STATE! REMINDS ME OF ONE O' MY FAVES, *PHILIP LEVINE:*
"*MEN* LIVED WITHIN THESE FOUNDRIES, HOUR BY HOUR; NOTHING THEY FORGED OUTLIVED THE RUSTED GEARS..."


"...WHICH MIGHT HAVE SERVED TO GRIND THEIR EULOGY."
YOU SUBSCRIBE TO POETRY, FRIEND?
I'M AN AMERICAN, AIN'T I?

YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO HAVE A TASTE FOR ME IN THAT BOTTLE, WOULD YOU?
NAH--IT'S AS SPENT AS MY YOUTH.
JUST AS WELL--DAY'S GOT MORE OF A CHILL THAN EXPECTED.

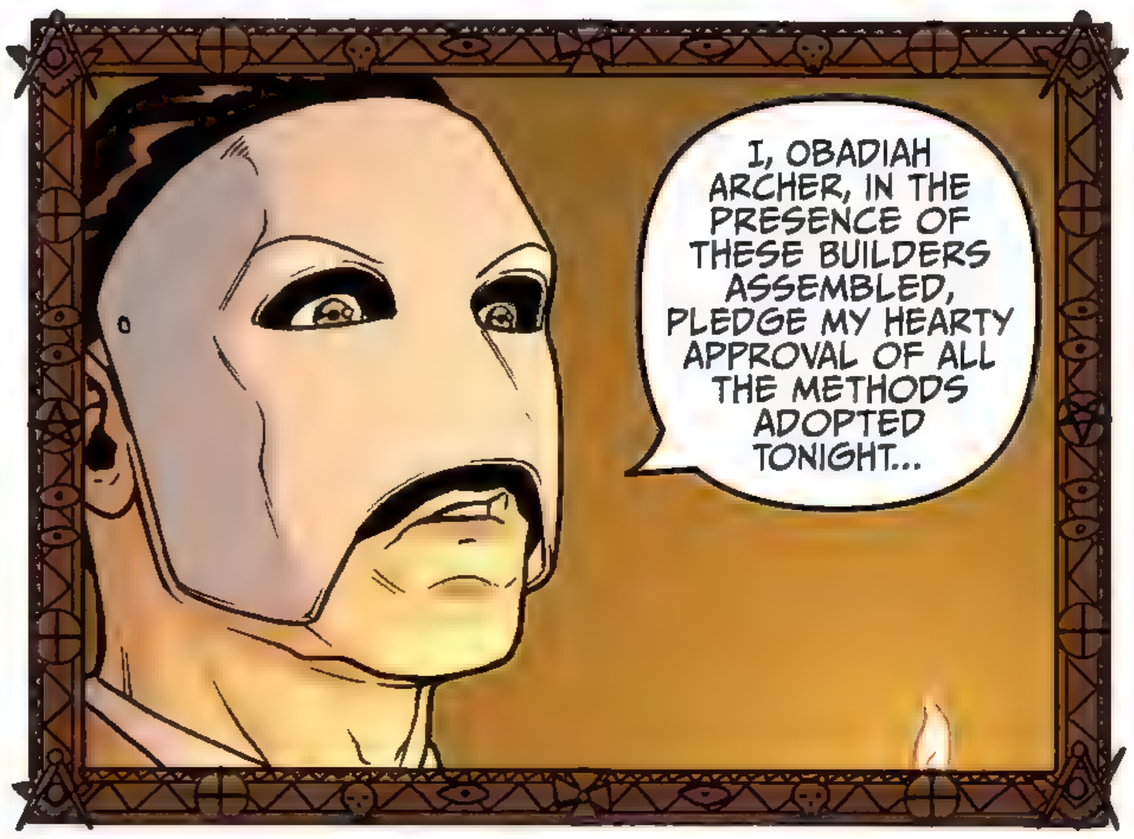
LET'S TRANSFER OUR DRINKING AND VERSIFYING INDOORS--HERE, I KNOW JUST THE PLACE.
CRAZY LEPRECHAUN
FOOD
FINE ALES
IRISH BEER
DRAFT BEER
IRISH BEER
HAPPY HOUR 2for1 drafts
OOOH! TWO-FOR-ONE BEERS!

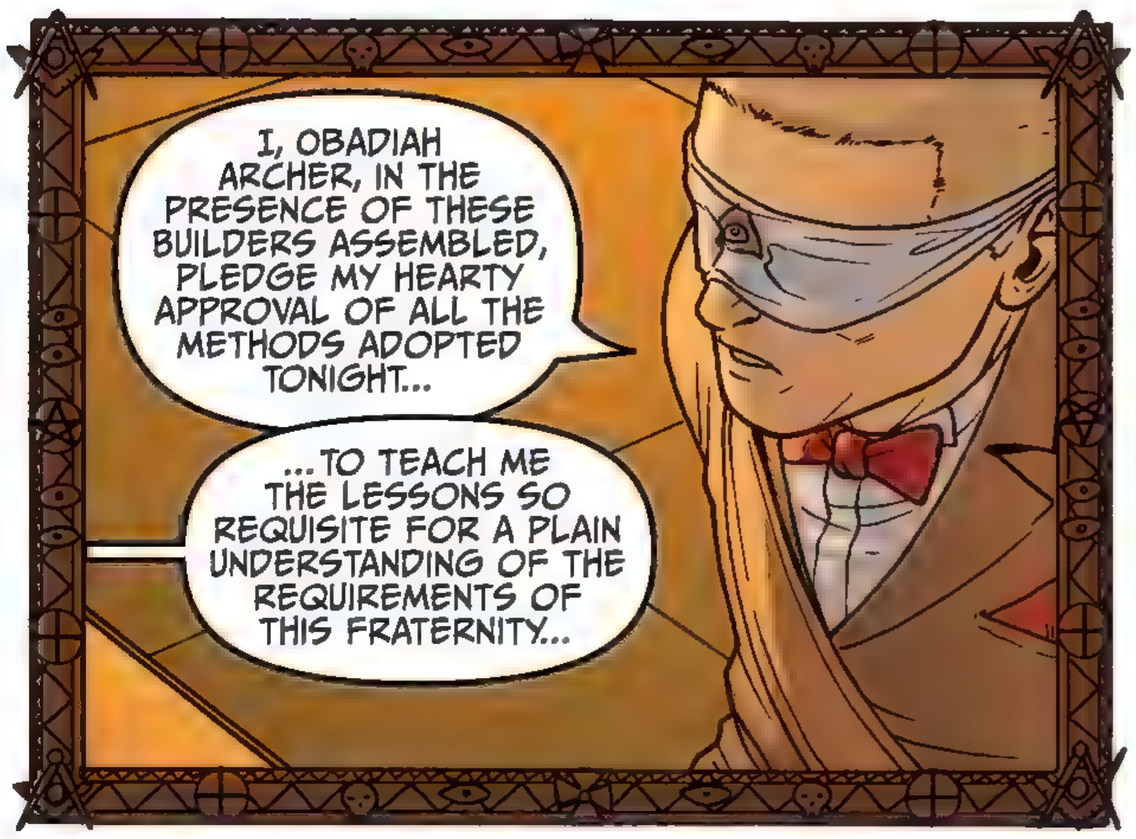
LOVELY BARKEEP! A PAIR--WELL, I GUESS A PAIR OF PAIRS--FOR ME, AND MY COMPANION...
JUST A VAGABOND, BY NAME AND VOCATION, THESE DAYS.
FAIR ENOUGH--I GO BY ARMSTRONG.

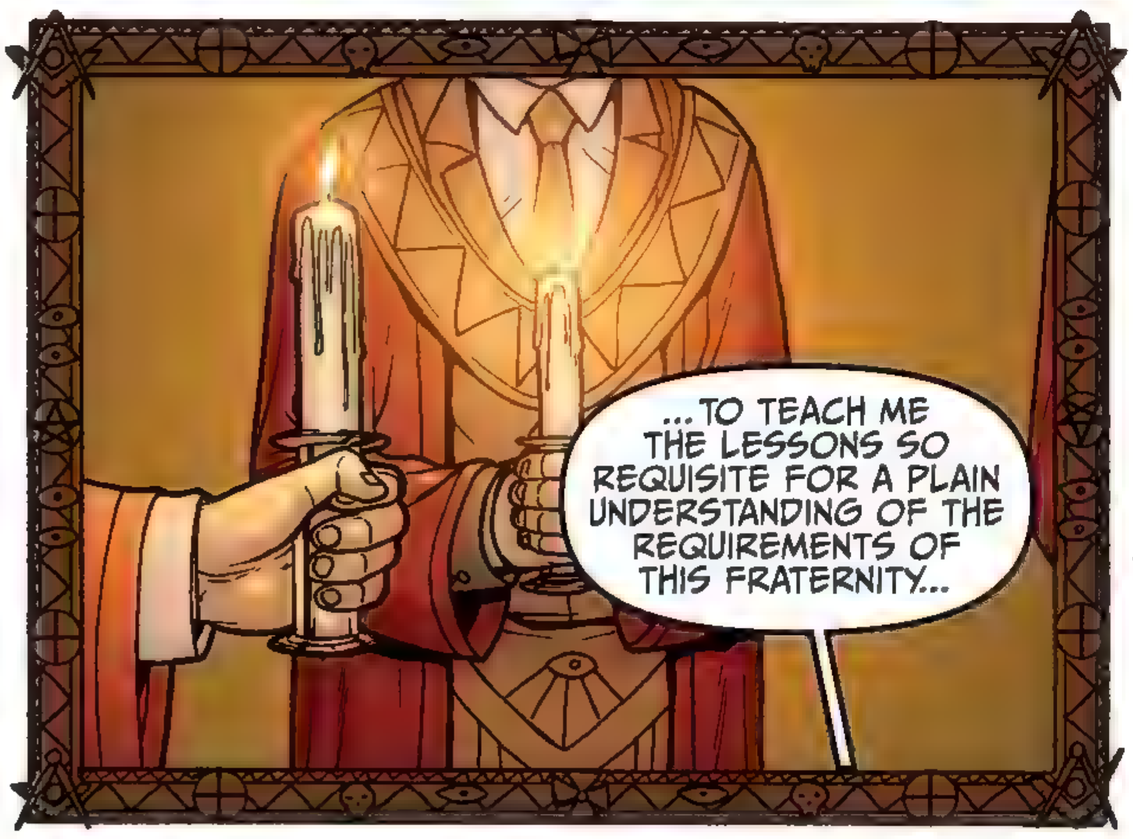
COMING RIGHT UP.
AND WE'LL TOAST, VAGABOND, TO LOVERS OF VERSE AND TRAVEL--

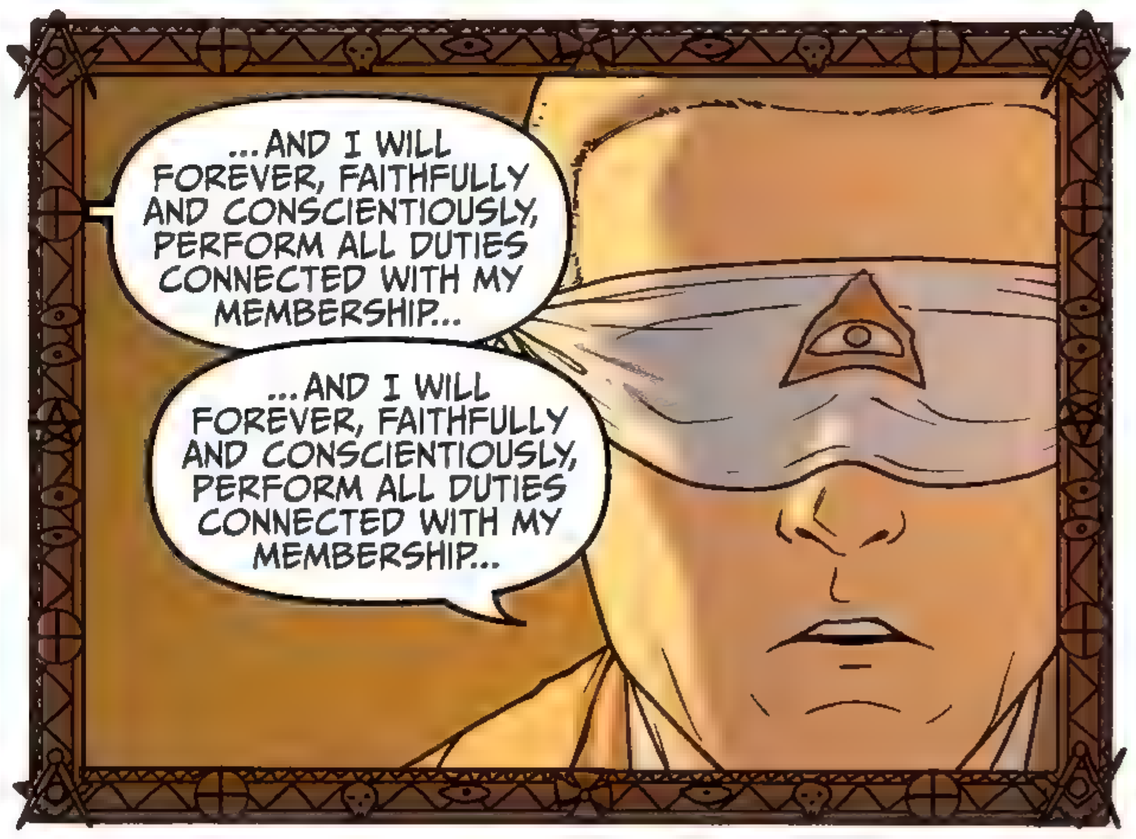
--AND THE HAPPY COINCIDENCES OF NEW FRIENDS MET ALONG THE TRAIL!

CANDIDATE: YOU WILL PLEASE KNEEL WHERE YOU ARE AND FOLD YOUR HANDS, RESTING AT THE ALTAR. YOU ARE *NOT* TO CHANGE THIS POSITION UNTIL I COMMAND YOU TO RISE.
BY THIS ACT, YOU PUBLICLY SIGNIFY SOUNDNESS OF MIND IN PLEDGING YOUR SACRED HONOR TO THIS SOLEMN VOW, WHICH I NOW ASK YOU TO REPEAT AFTER ME:

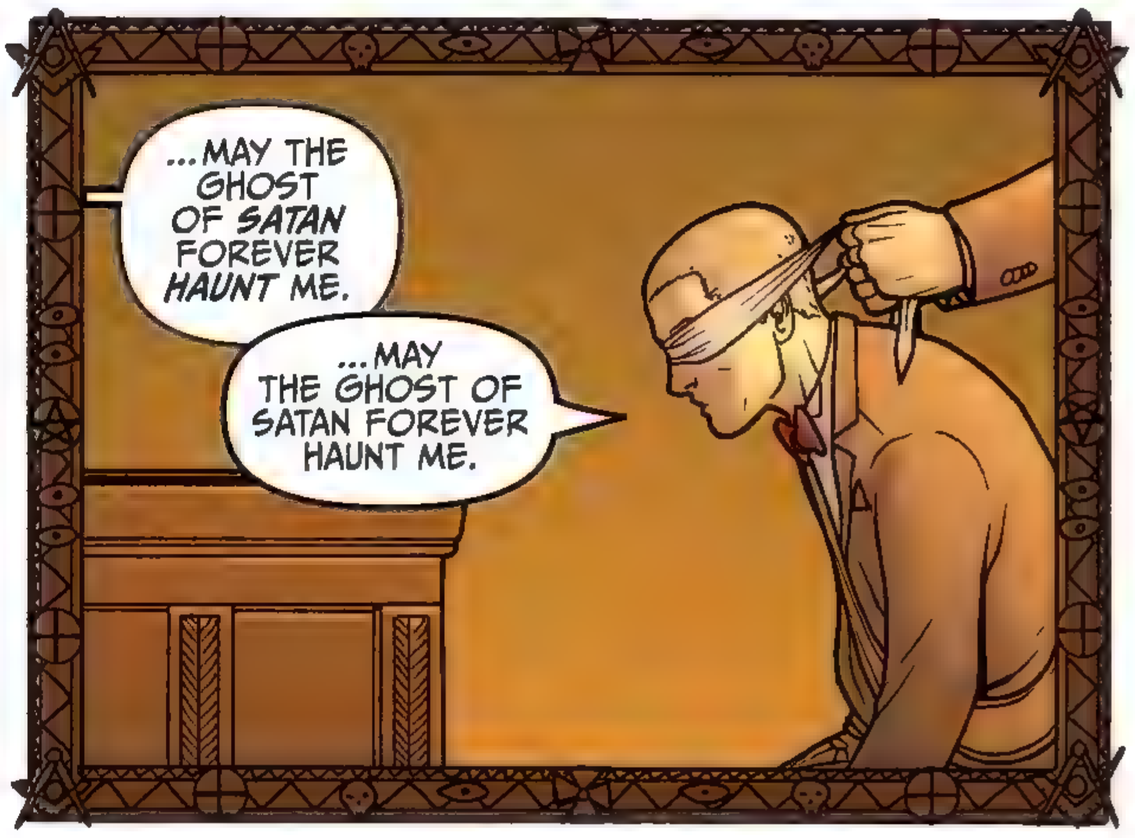

I, OBADIAH ARCHER, IN THE PRESENCE OF THESE BUILDERS ASSEMBLED, PLEDGE MY HEARTY APPROVAL OF ALL THE METHODS ADOPTED TONIGHT...


I, OBADIAH ARCHER, IN THE PRESENCE OF THESE BUILDERS ASSEMBLED, PLEDGE MY HEARTY APPROVAL OF ALL THE METHODS ADOPTED TONIGHT...
...TO TEACH ME THE LESSONS SO REQUISITE FOR A PLAIN UNDERSTANDING OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS FRATERNITY...


...TO TEACH ME THE LESSONS SO REQUISITE FOR A PLAIN UNDERSTANDING OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS FRATERNITY...


...AND I WILL FOREVER, FAITHFULLY AND CONSCIENTIOUSLY, PERFORM ALL DUTIES CONNECTED WITH MY MEMBERSHIP...
...AND I WILL FOREVER, FAITHFULLY AND CONSCIENTIOUSLY, PERFORM ALL DUTIES CONNECTED WITH MY MEMBERSHIP...

...AND IF I FLINCH IN THIS OBLIGATION, OR SHOW SIGNS OF DECEIT...
...AND IF I FLINCH IN THIS OBLIGATION, OR SHOW SIGNS OF DECEIT...

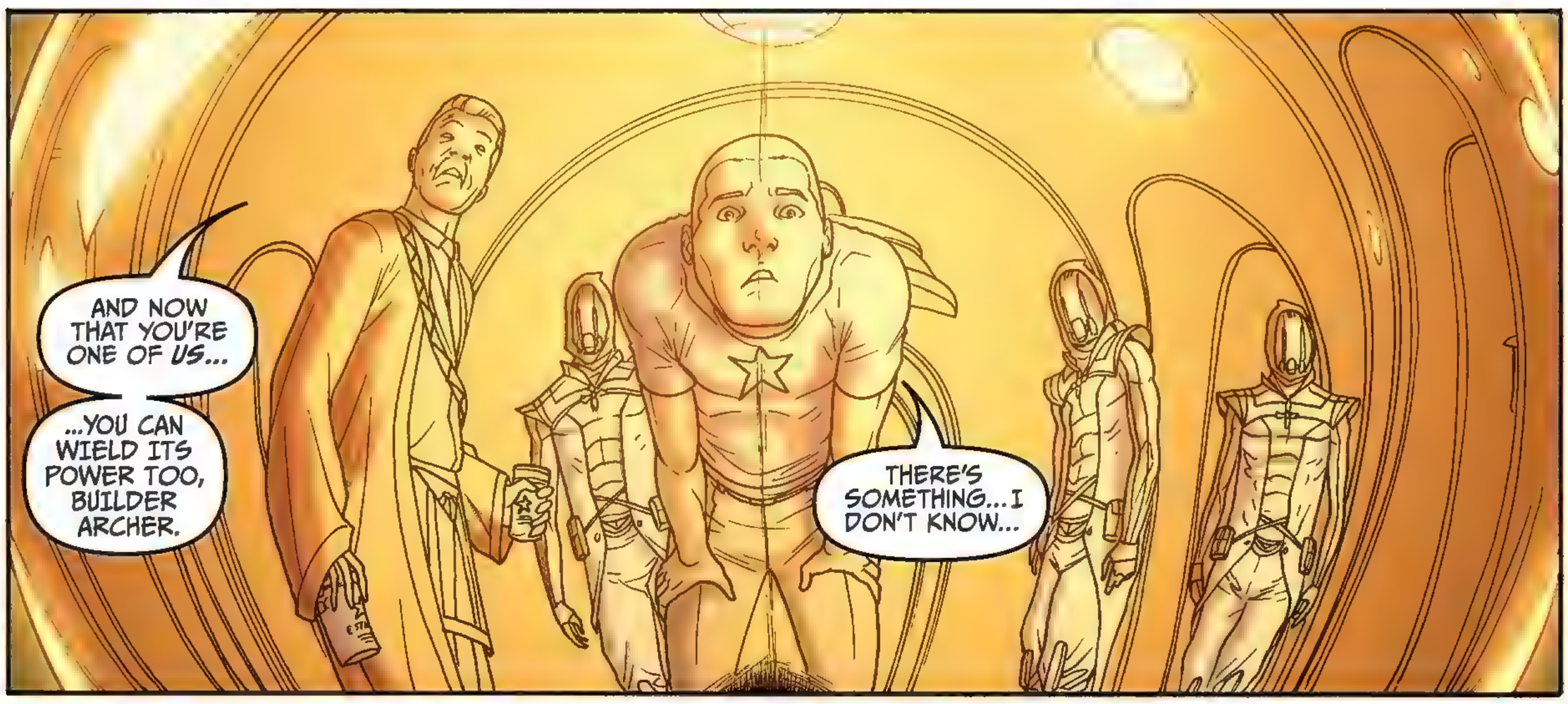

...MAY THE GHOST OF *SATAN* FOREVER *HAUNT* ME.
...MAY THE GHOST OF SATAN FOREVER HAUNT ME.

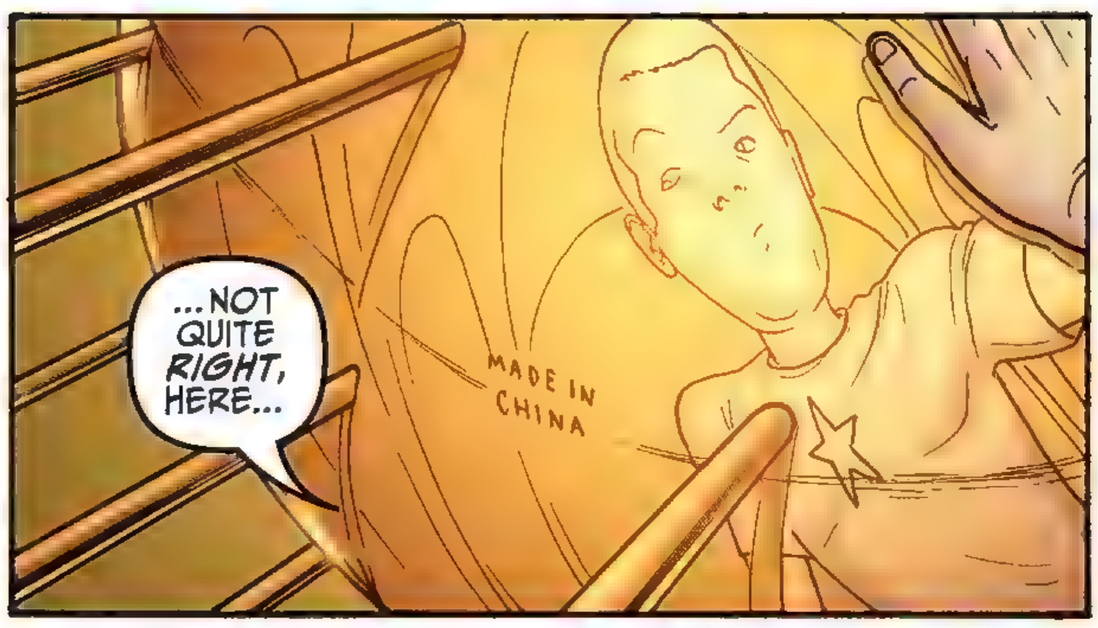
ARRROOOOGAAAA

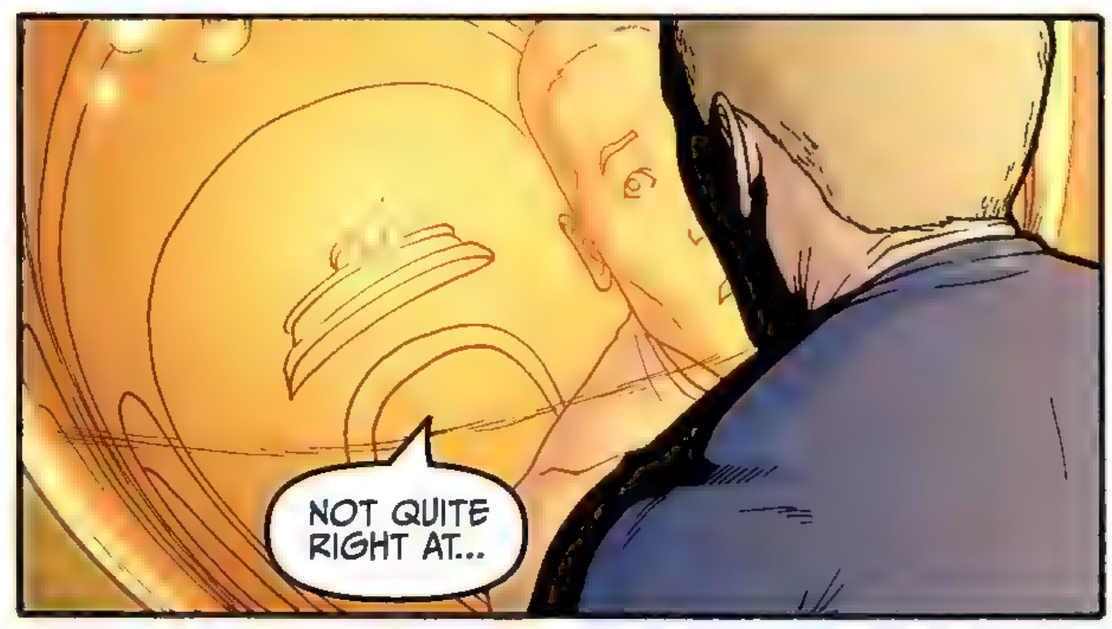
SO... THIS IS IT.

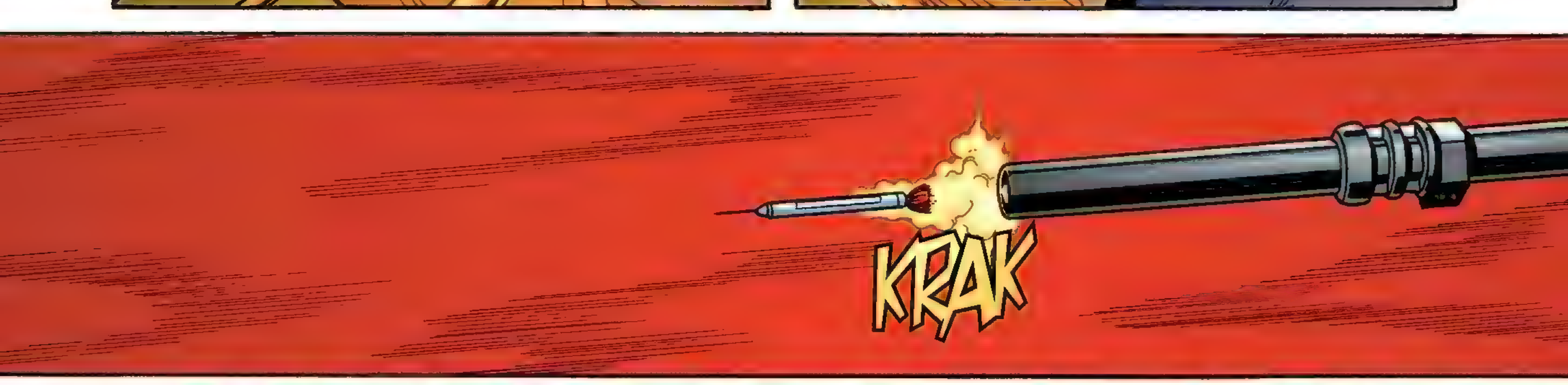
THE WHEEL OF ATEN...

YEAH-- BIG SUCKER, AIN'T IT?

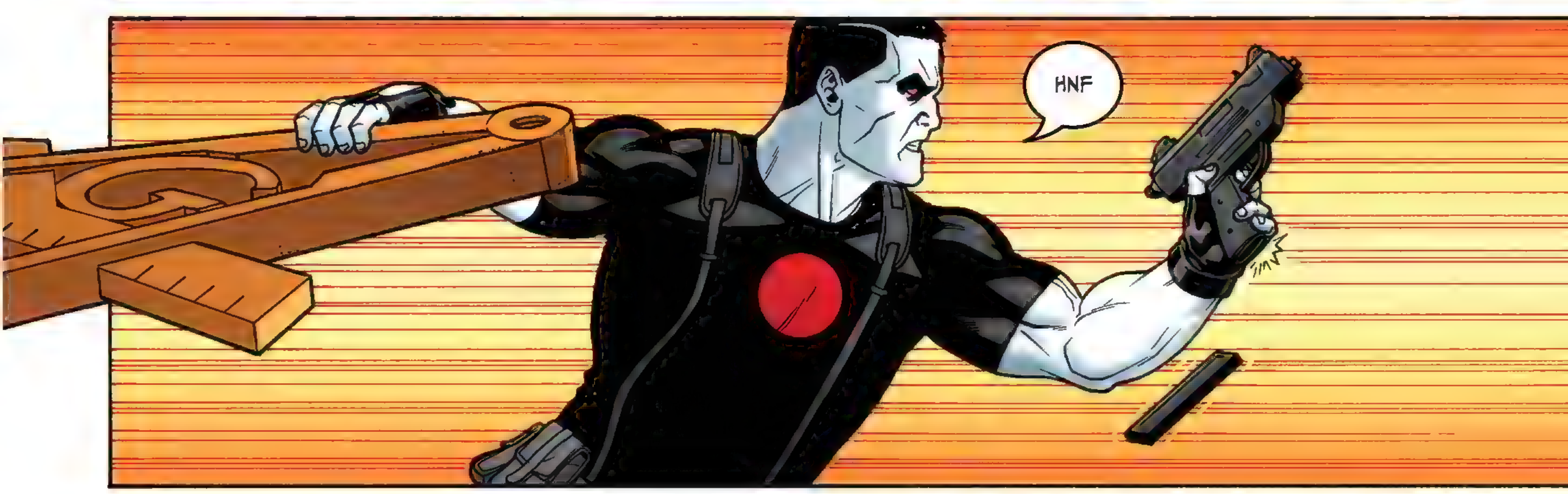

AND NOW THAT YOU'RE ONE OF *US*...
...YOU CAN WIELD ITS POWER TOO, BUILDER ARCHER.
THERE'S SOMETHING... I DON'T KNOW...


...NOT QUITE *RIGHT*, HERE...
MADE IN CHINA


NOT QUITE RIGHT AT...

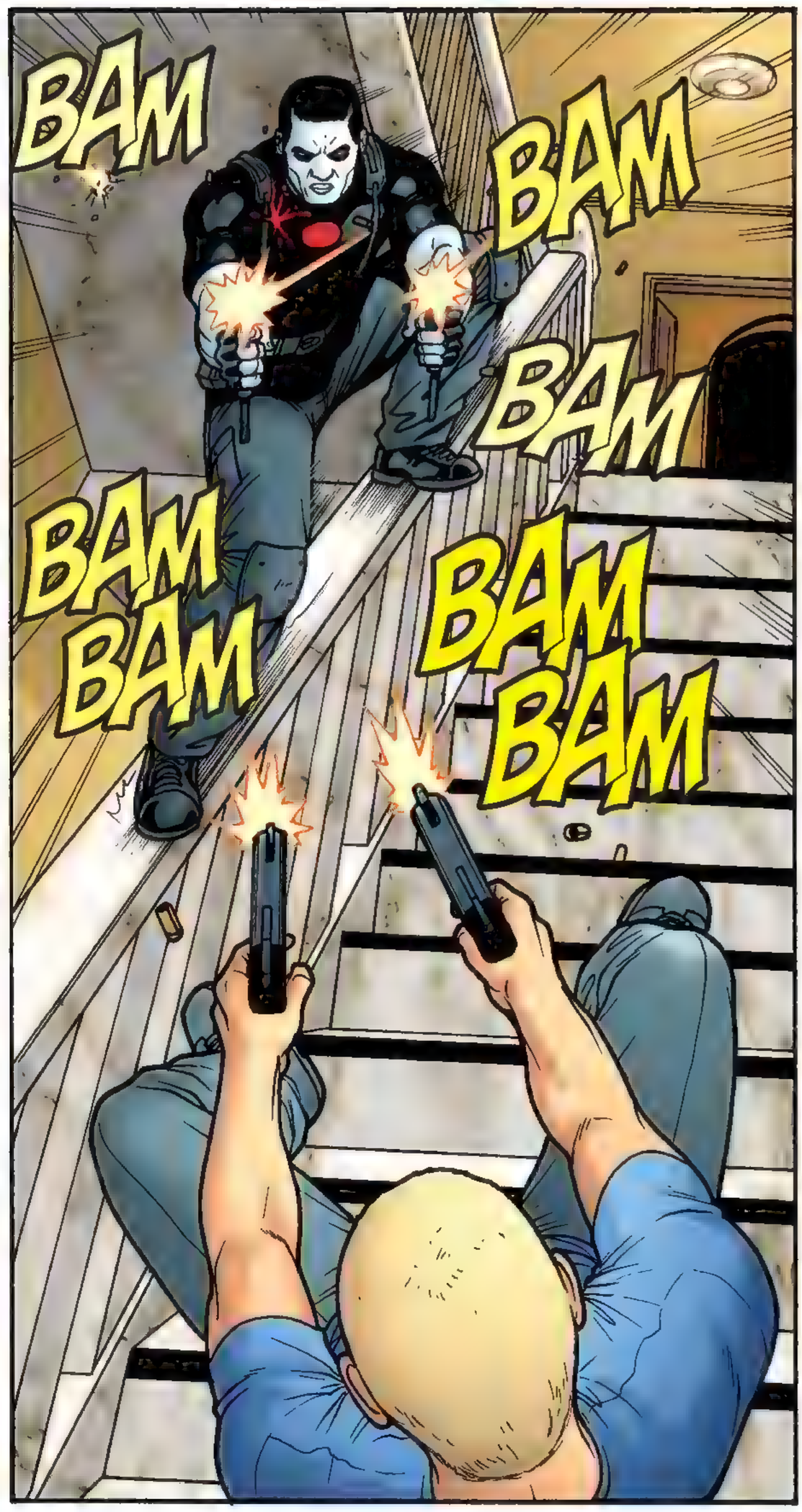

KRAK

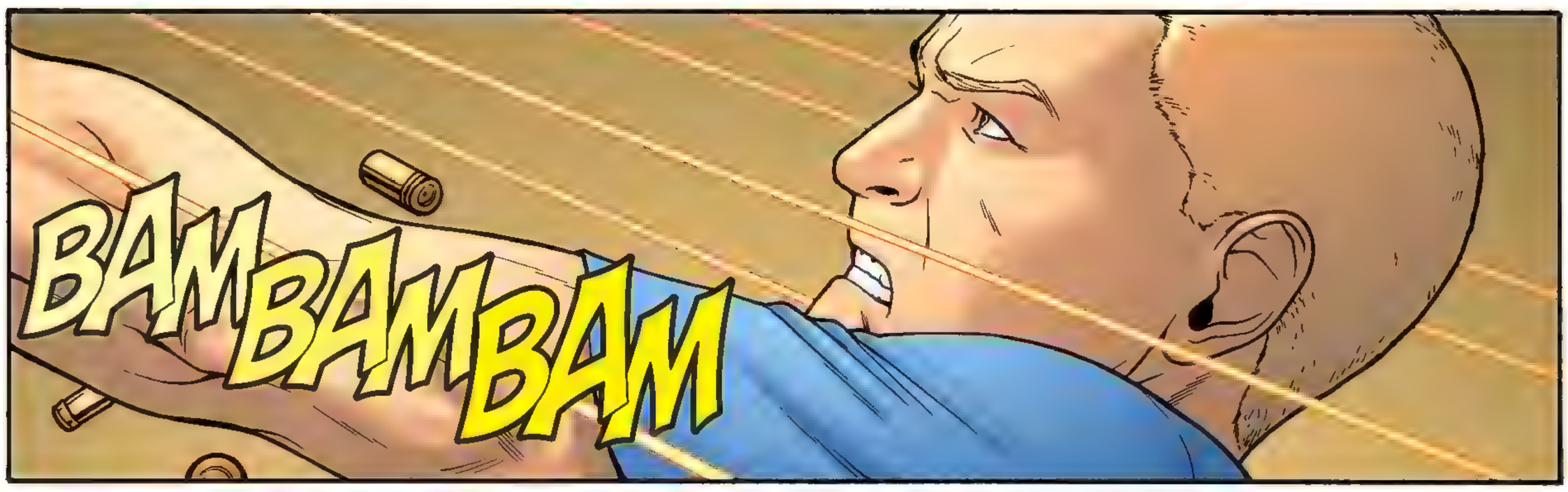
KRRRRSHH



gun fu is the sophisticated close-quarters gunplay seen in Hong Kong action cinema

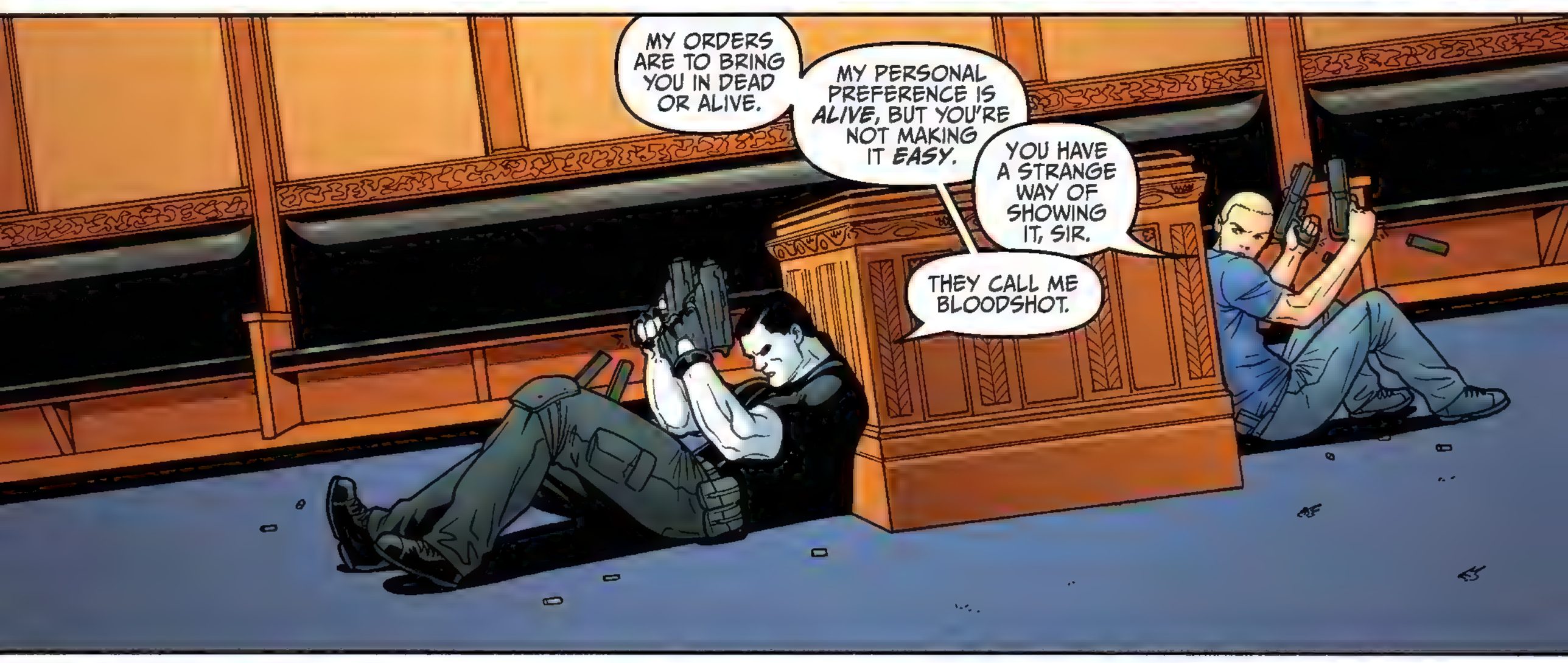
BAM BAM BAM
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM

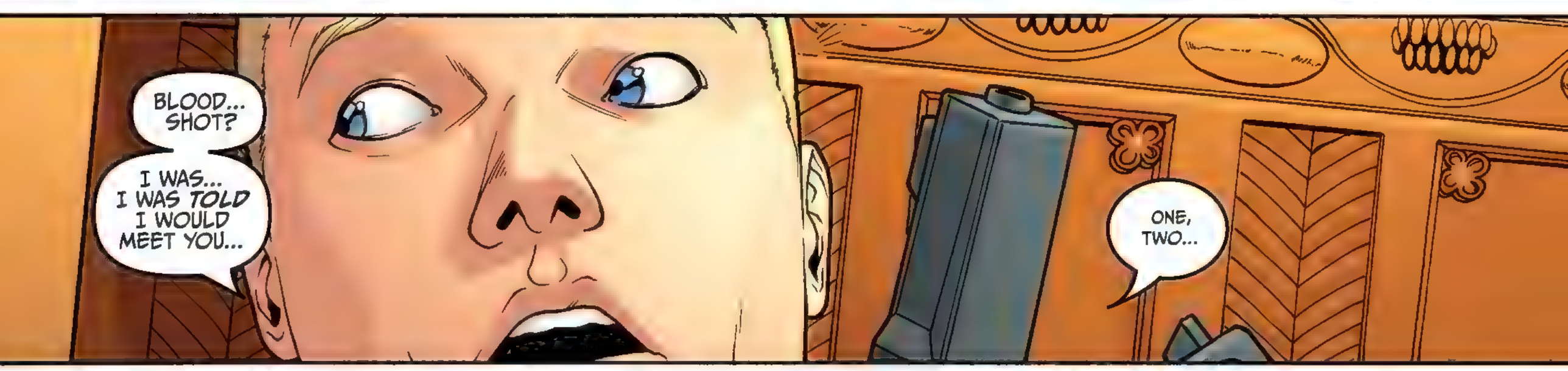

BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM


BAM BAM BAM

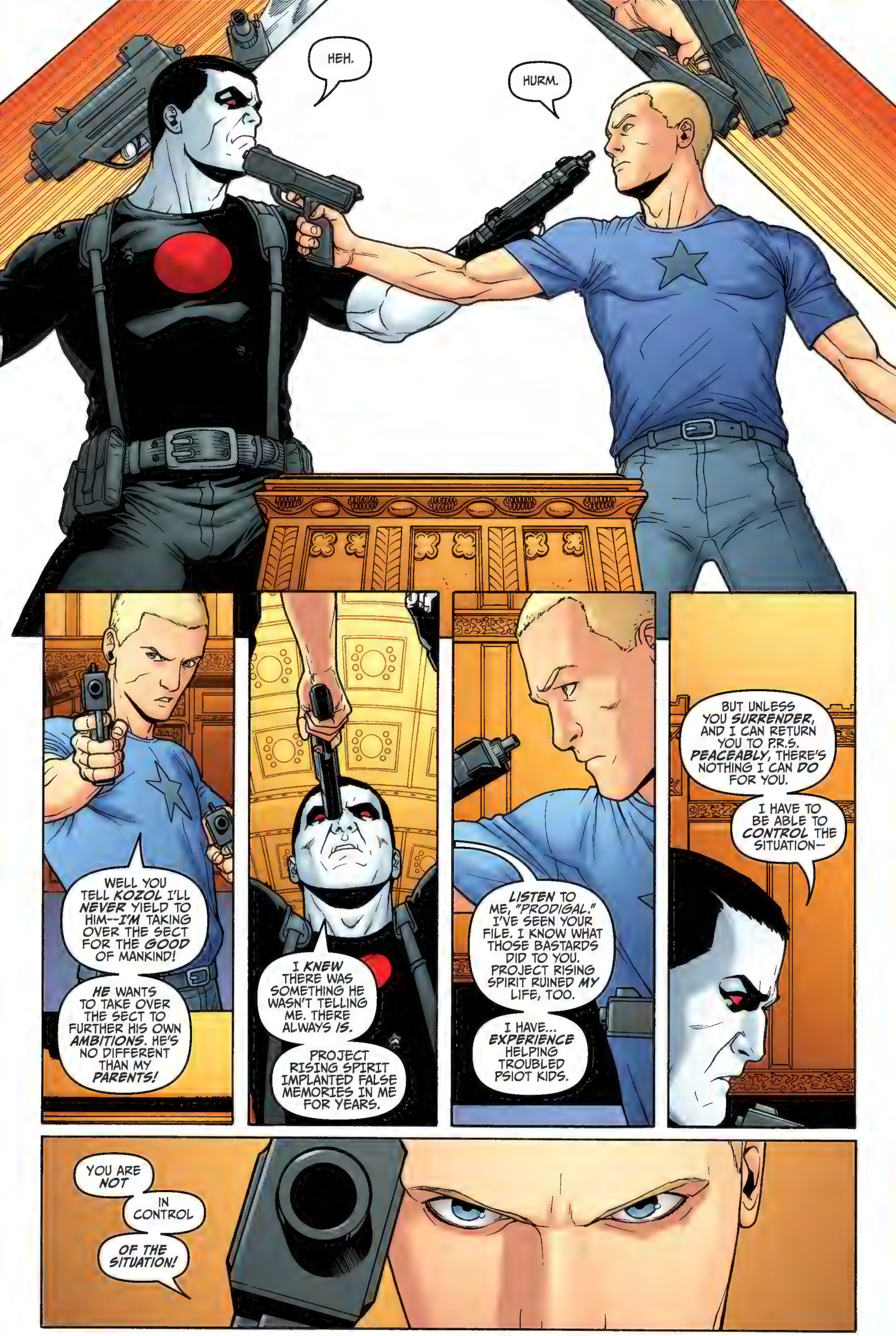
NNF!
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM

CHUG! CHUG! CHUG! CHUG!

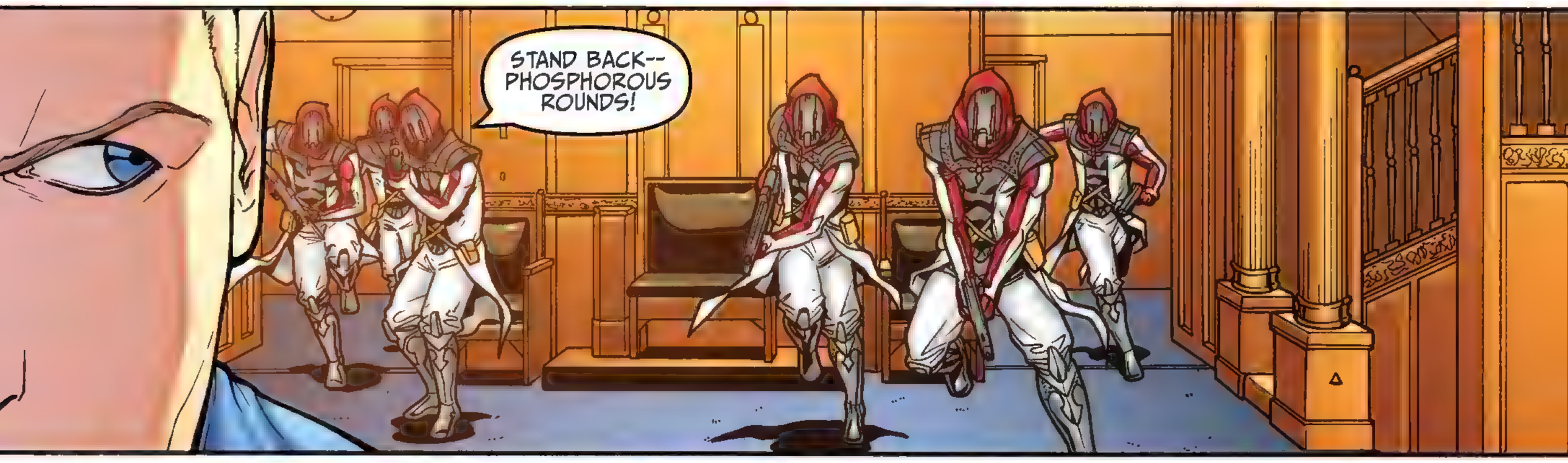

MY ORDERS ARE TO BRING YOU IN DEAD OR ALIVE.
MY PERSONAL PREFERENCE IS *ALIVE*, BUT YOU'RE NOT MAKING IT *EASY*.
YOU HAVE A STRANGE WAY OF SHOWING IT, SIR.
THEY CALL ME BLOODSHOT.


BLOOD... SHOT?
I WAS... I WAS *TOLD* I WOULD MEET YOU...
ONE, TWO...

PROJECT RISING SPIRIT SAYS YOU'RE A *MAD DOG*, YOU NEED TO BE *PUT DOWN*.
YOU GONNA CONVINCE ME *OTHERWISE?*
ONE, TWO...


HEH.
HURM.
WELL YOU TELL KOZOL I'LL NEVER YIELD TO HIM--I'M TAKING OVER THE SECT FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND!
HE WANTS TO TAKE OVER THE SECT TO FURTHER HIS OWN AMBITIONS. HE'S NO DIFFERENT THAN MY PARENTS!
I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING HE WASN'T TELLING ME. THERE ALWAYS IS.
PROJECT RISING SPIRIT IMPLANTED FALSE MEMORIES IN ME FOR YEARS.
LISTEN TO ME, "PRODIGAL." I'VE SEEN YOUR FILE. I KNOW WHAT THOSE BASTARDS DID TO YOU. PROJECT RISING SPIRIT RUINED MY LIFE, TOO.
I HAVE... EXPERIENCE HELPING TROUBLED PSIOT KIDS.
BUT UNLESS YOU SURRENDER, AND I CAN RETURN YOU TO P.R.S. PEACEABLY, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU.
I HAVE TO BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE SITUATION--
YOU ARE NOT IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION!

THEY DESTROYED THE SACRED WHEEL--TAKE 'EM OUT!

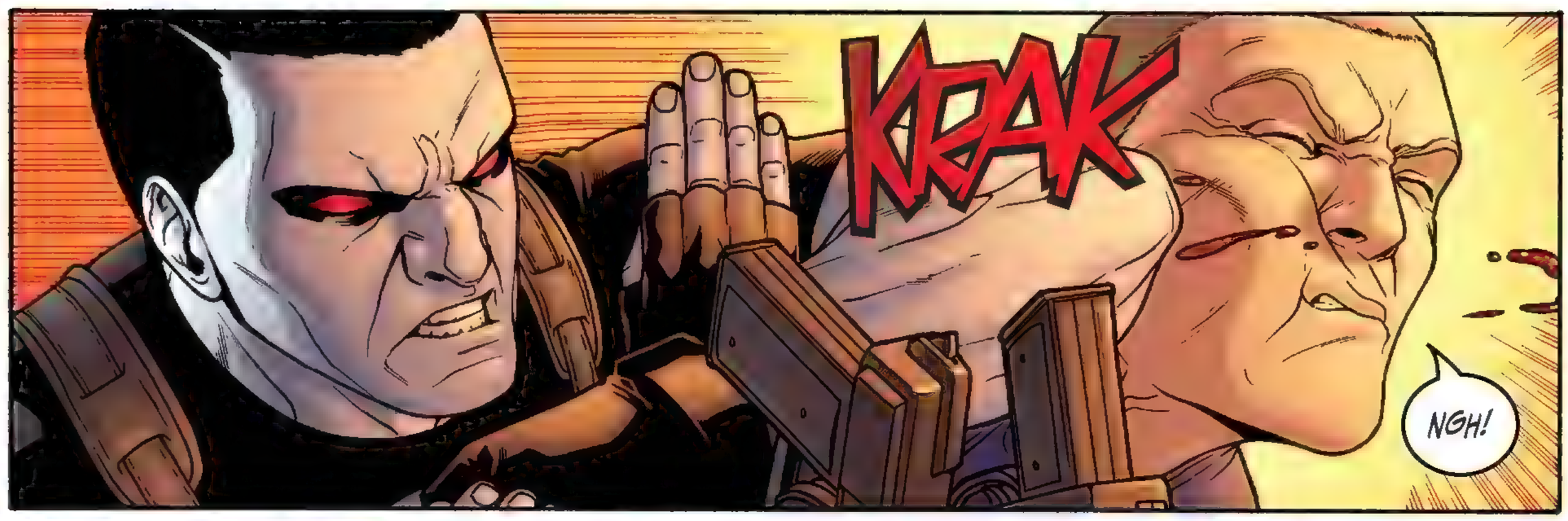

STAND BACK-- PHOSPHOROUS ROUNDS!

BAM BAM BAM BAM
BAM BAM BAM

BAM BAM BAM BAM
BAM BAM BAM

WUBOOOM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAMBAMBAM
KLK
KLK
KLK
KLK
DRAT...

FWAP
krav ma•ga is a self-defense system developed by the Israel Defense Forces, based on the teachings of


KRAK
NGH!

FAST.
BUT STILL HUMAN—

WHAMM
NGUNNH!

FINE.
KUNG FU'S NOT MY WHEELHOUSE.

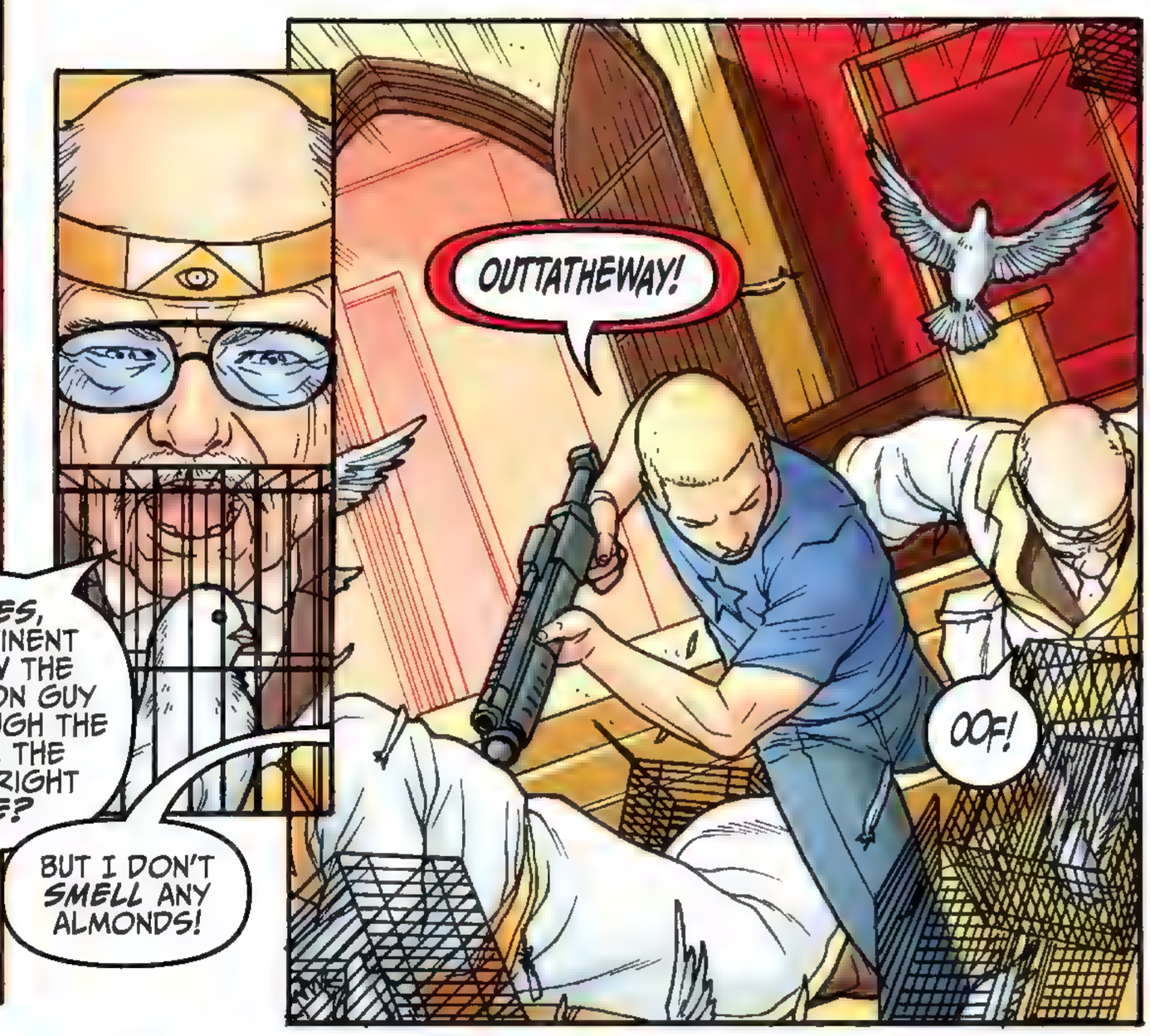
THIS IS.
BRRD BRRD BRRD BRRD

BRRD BRRD BRRD BRRD

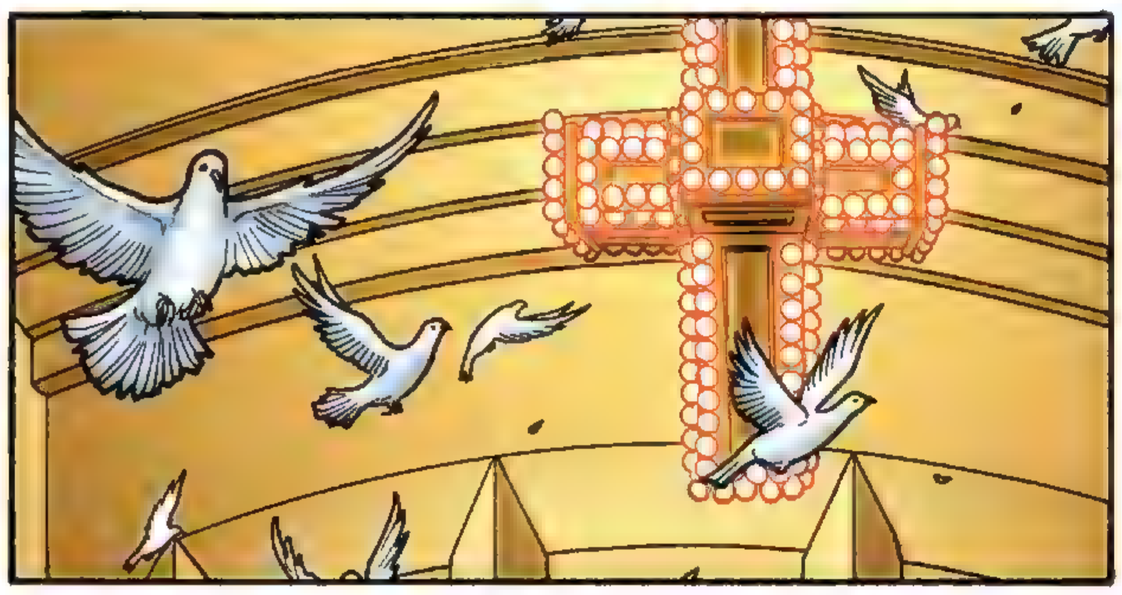
SKESSH
BRRD BRRD BRRD BRRD

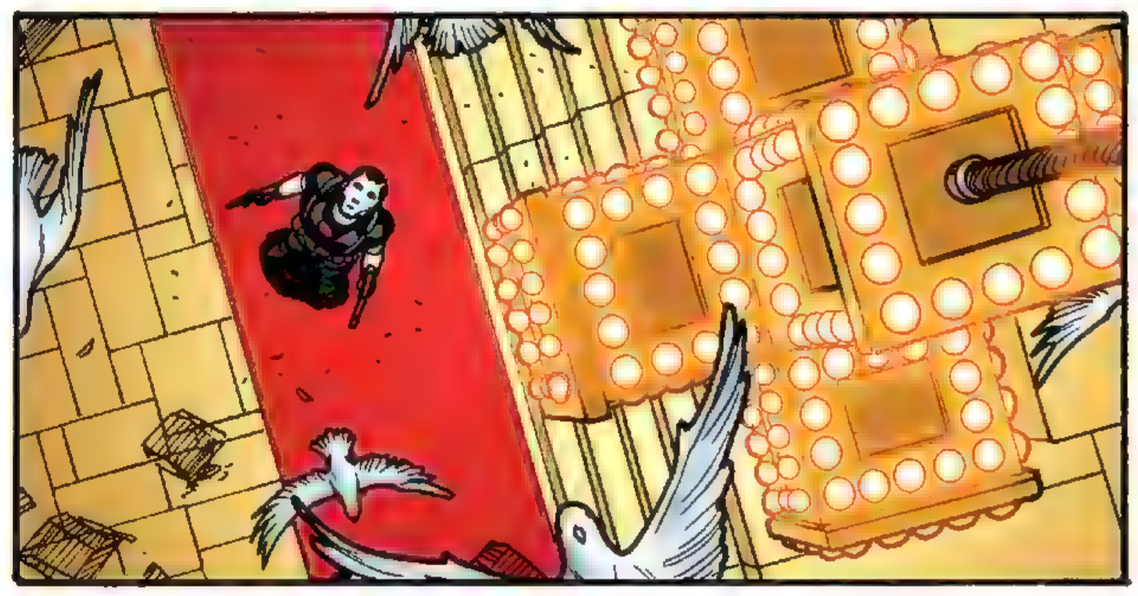
SKESSH

WHEN ARE WE SUPPOSED TO RELEASE THE DOVES?
THE WHAT?


THE DOVES, YOU INCONTINENT IDJIT! WHEN THE NEW DOMINION GUY WALKS THROUGH THE DOOR FOR THE WINGS, OR RIGHT BEFORE?
BUT I DON'T SMELL ANY ALMONDS!
OUTTATHEWAY!
OOF!

BRRD
BRRD
BRRD
BRRD





BOOM

I... I'M SORRY I HAD TO DO THAT, MISTER BLOODSHOT.
BUT IT WAS FORETOLD.

AHH!
THERE'S NO FUTURE, KID.

NO TRUE PAST.
JUST THE MOMENT.

THAT'S WHY YOU GET BEAT.
I– NO– I SAW YOU– YOU DIED–

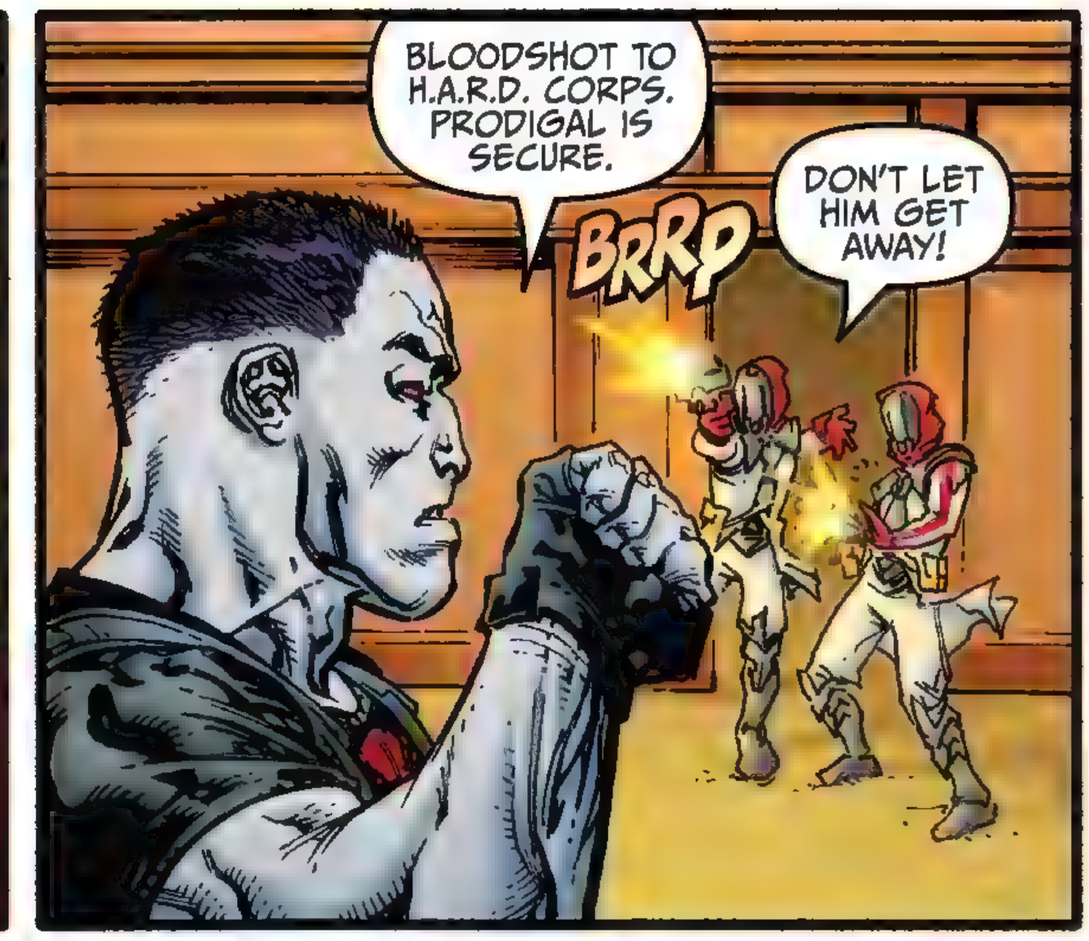
GOT BETTER.
WHERE WE'RE HEADED...
...DON'T KNOW I'LL BE ABLE TO SAY THE SAME ABOUT YOU.

CHRISTOS GAGE JOSHUA DYSART TOM FANEY GINA GOINO
VALIANT
#20
BLOODSHOT and H.A.R.D. CORPS
MISSION: IMPROBABLE 21
HI! I'M OBADIAH ARCHER.
KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN! THERE'S SOME SORT OF HALF-ROBOT FRANKENSTEIN LOOKING FOR ME.
HIS SKIN KINDA LOOKS LIKE CHALK AND HE'S GOT BEADY RED EYES LIKE A BUNNY.
I THINK HE'S OUT TO KILL ME.
WELL, TAKE A FLIPPIN' NUMBER, FRIEND-O!
LaRosa MW

H.A.R.D. CORPS BRIEFING ROOM.
YESTERDAY.
SO. YOU KNOW HOW THE INTERNET IS FULL OF INSANE CONSPIRACY THEORISTS WHO SAY THE WORLD IS ACTUALLY RUN BY A HIDDEN CABAL OF SECRET SOCIETIES?
FUNNY STORY.
IT'S TRUE.
I KNEW IT!
HOLD ON, MR. KOZOL-- WOULD OUR SECRET SOCIETY BE ONE OF THESE SECRET SOCIETIES?
YES.
WHAT MAJOR PALMER MEANS IS THAT PROJECT RISING SPIRIT IS PART OF THIS CABAL--IT'S CALLED THE SECT, INCIDENTALLY--
--BUT THAT PREDATES MY INVOLVEMENT, AND IS REALLY MORE OF A HEADACHE THAN ANYTHING.
IT ALSO, HOPEFULLY, WILL NOT BE AN ISSUE MUCH LONGER.
A CIVIL WAR AMONG SECT FACTIONS WAS WON BY THIS BOY, OBADIAH ARCHER. A FANATICAL RELIGIOUS ZEALOT, AND ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS PEOPLE ALIVE.
HE'S A PSIOT WITH THE ABILITY TO MIMIC ANY SKILL, INCLUDING OTHER PSIOT POWERS.
P.R.S. TORTURED HIM, BRAINWASHED HIM, AND TURNED HIM OVER TO THESE LUNATICS.
AGAIN, BEFORE MY TIME. IT IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF P.R.S. AND THE WORLD THAT WE RECAPTURE MR. ARCHER BEFORE HE CAN CONSOLIDATE THE REMNANTS OF THE SECT INTO AN ARMY.
THE MAIN OBSTACLE IS HIS BODYGUARD, A MAN KNOWN ONLY AS ARMSTRONG. SUPER-STRONG, DURABLE, AND POSSIBLY IMMORTAL.
HE'S YOUR JOB. YOU DON'T HAVE TO KILL HIM, JUST STALL HIM.
I'LL HANDLE THE KID.

DETROIT. THE MASONIC TEMPLE.
NOW.
YOU'RE SOME KINDA *PRODIGY*, HUH, ARCHER?
YOU CAN DOWNLOAD SKILLS INTO YOUR BRAIN?
WELL, YOU GOT THREE SECONDS.
PICK A *GOOD* ONE.
READ *ARCHER & ARMSTRONG #18* TO SEE THE EPIC BLOODSHOT VS. ARCHER BATTLE!

NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
WHUMP


BLOODSHOT TO H.A.R.D. CORPS. PRODIGAL IS SECURE.
BRRP
DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!

I'LL BE AT THE EXTRACTION POINT IN FIVE.
BRRP
BRRP

BE ADVISED THERE MAY BE HOSTILES.

NO SERIOUS THREAT.
YOU DOING OKAY WITH THE FAT ONE?
BWHOOM

ONE BLOCK AWAY.
EVERYTHING'S GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN.
CHUG! CHUG! CHUG!
BRUUP. THAT HIT THE SPOT.
IT'S BEEN FUN...VAGABOND, YOU SAID, RIGHT? BUT I SHOULD GO CHECK ON MY LITTLE BUDDY.
AH, C'MON. ONE FOR THE ROAD.
I'D LIKE TO. BUT I LET HIM DOWN BEFORE. PROMISED I'D NEVER DO IT AGAIN.
YEAH, I'VE BEEN THERE. HARD PROMISE TO KEEP FOR GUYS LIKE US.
WHOO. THAT HIT ME HARDER THAN I EXPECTED.
THAT'D BE ALL THE ROOFIES.
YOU SEEM LIKE A DECENT FELLA. SORRY ABOUT THIS.
LIFELINE, DOWNLOAD MUSCLE MODE.
Y'KNOW, I COULDA SWORN YOU JUST SAID ROOF--
KONK

I HAVE NEVER SEEN ANYONE INGEST SO MANY DRUGS AND STAY UPRIGHT.
I DON'T KNOW IF I ENVY HIM OR PITY HIM.
GOOD JOB. LET'S GO, BLOODSHOT'S GOT ARCHER AT THE EXTRACTION POINT.
HOLD ON.
PARTY'S NOT OVER YET.

YOU SET A TRAP FOR ME WITH *BOOZE?*
THAT'S LIKE PUTTING POPEYE IN A CAGE OF SPINACH!
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM
LOOK OUT, IDIOT!
OW.
QUIT IT.
KRNCH
NO GUNS! TOO CLOSE QUARTERS.
LIFELINE, GIVE ME *NEURAL SPIKE.*
REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
YEAH, THAT'S ANNOYING. MIGHT EVEN GIVE ME A HEADACHE.
IF YOU HADN'T *NUMBED MY BRAIN WITH BEER.*
OH, CRAP.
YOUR TURN TO TALK. *WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?*

WE'RE HUMAN BEINGS.

HURK!
WE'RE THE ONES WHO PROTECT PEOPLE LIKE US FROM PEOPLE LIKE YOU.

BLAGG

THAPP
I'VE BEEN AROUND A LONG TIME.

HNNGH--
MY EXPERIENCE, HUMAN BEINGS ARE WHAT EVERYBODY NEEDS PROTECTING FROM.

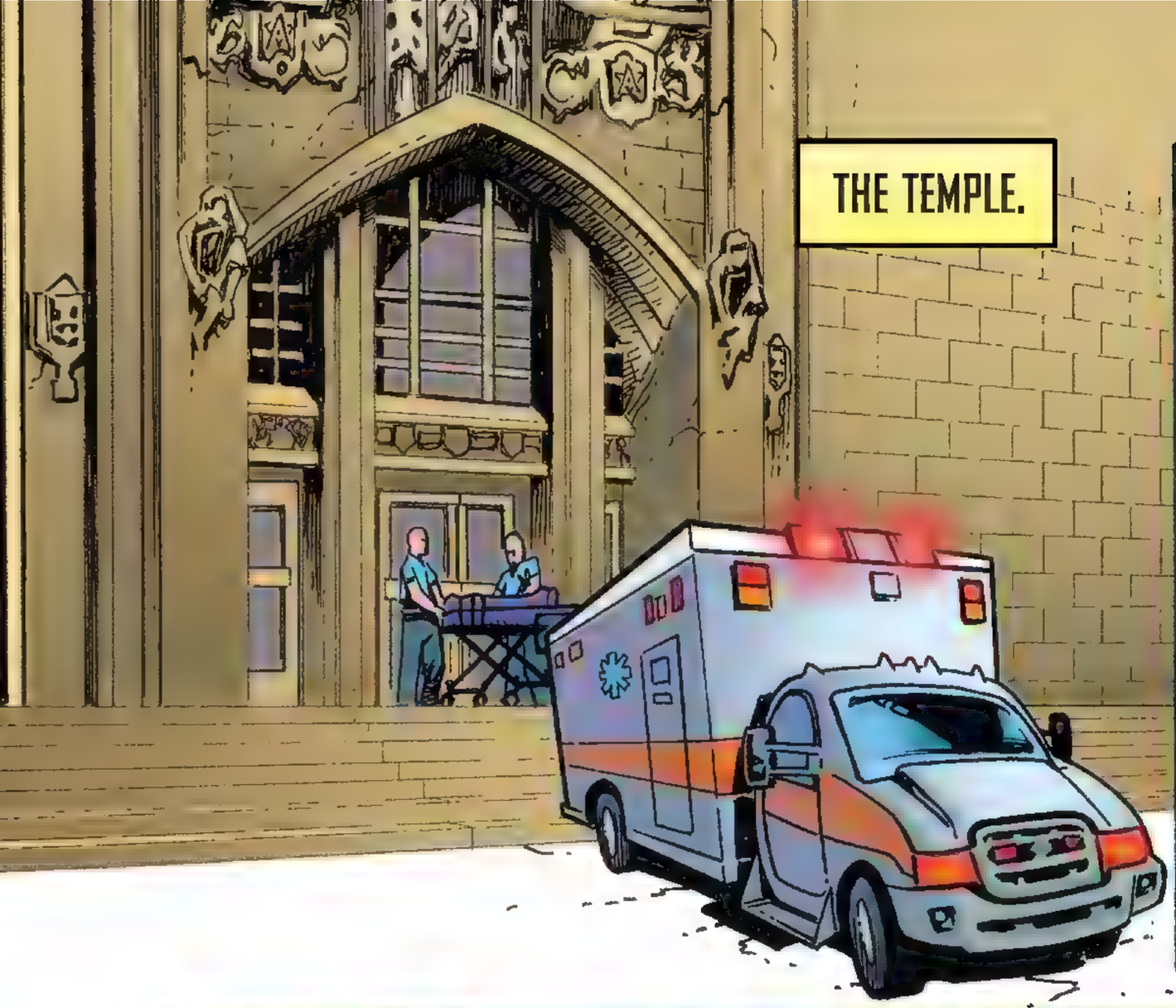
H-HE'S SHORTING OUT MUSCLE MODE!
FOCUS, GENIUS. GET IN POSITION.
WE DON'T BEAT THIS GUY BY BEING STRONG.

THANKS FOR MAKING ME PUKE UP THE DRUGS.
RRRRZZZZ

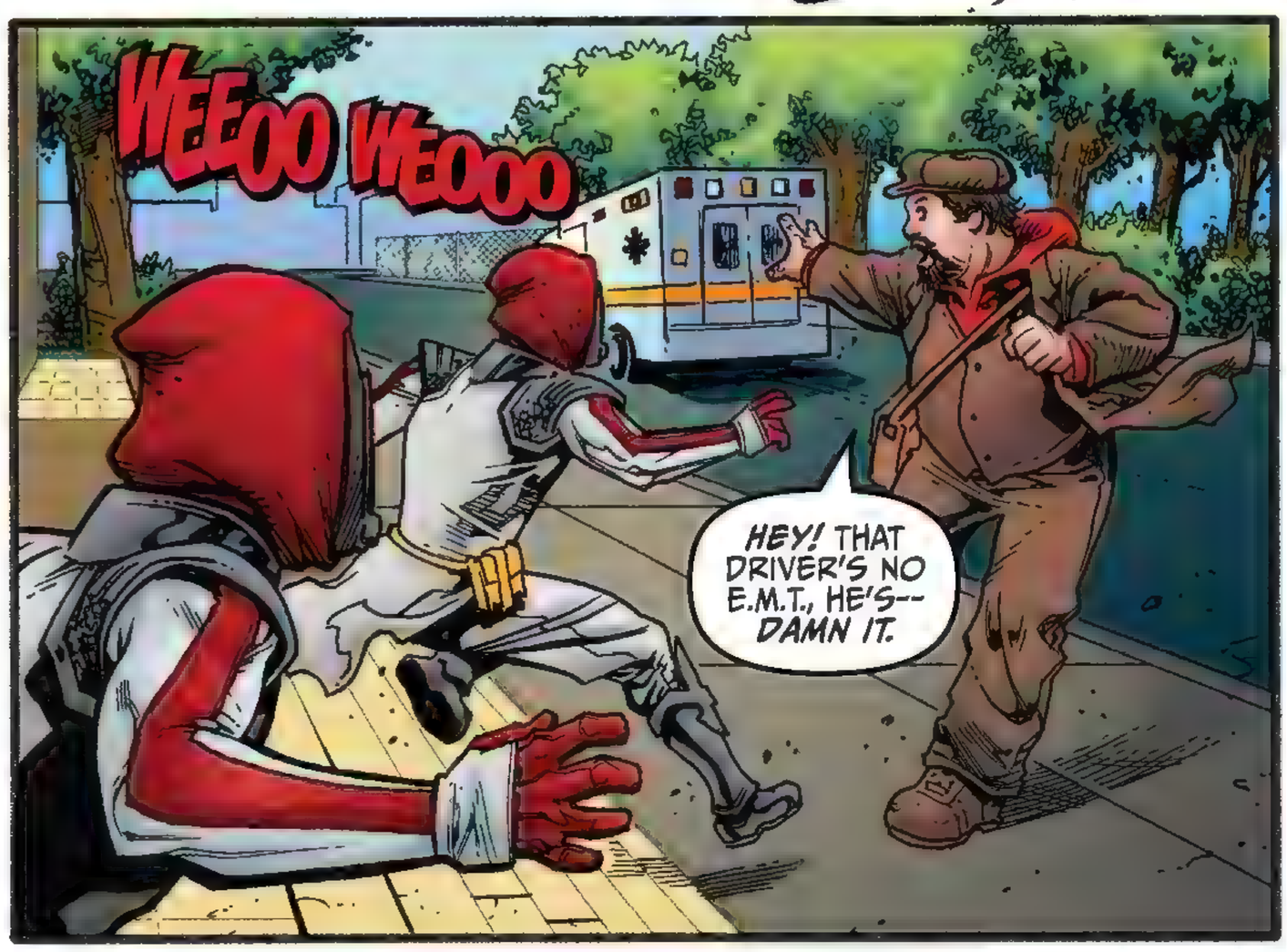
I'M FEELING BETTER NOW.
LIFELINE, SHIELDS--
BRAKT

WE DO IT BY FIGHTING SMART.
GRANITE TO LIFELINE. SEQUENCE EPSILON.
DETONATION, THEN GHOST.

FROOM
GET TO THE EXTRACTION POINT. THAT'LL HOLD HIM A WHILE...
...BUT NOT FOREVER.


THE TEMPLE.

THE HIGHEST-RANKING MASTER BUILDER MUST BE SEEN TO FIRST!
THEY SAID THIS GUY'S LEVEL SEVENTY-TWO. HE'S IN BAD SHAPE, WE GOTTA GO.


WEEOO WEOOO
HEY! THAT DRIVER'S NO E.M.T., HE'S-- DAMN IT.

GET ME YOUR CAR--OR MOTORCYCLE, IF YOU GOT 'EM!
THEY BLEW UP THE MOTOR POOL. WE HAVE NO OPERATIONAL VEHICLES.

THERE'S THE CARS WE USE IN PARADES. THOSE ARE KEPT SEPARATELY.
PARADES?
OH, YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME...

WEEOO WEOOO
WEEOO WEOOO
VRRRRRRRR

OH, MAN... I CAN'T FEEL MY JUNK.

THAT LITTLE BUGGY'S FAST.
SURE. HAVEN'T YOU EVER SEEN SHRINERS USE THEM IN PARADES?
THEY DO ALL KINDS OF STUNTS. LIKE EVEL KNIEVEL IN A CLOWN CAR.
YOU THINK HE COULD ACTUALLY CATCH US?

NO.
OPEN THE DOORS.

ADMIT IT. YOU DIDN'T THINK THIS THROUGH, DID YOU?

BRRD BRRD

ACTUALLY...

...I DID.

BWHOOOM

BOOYAH! MORE THAN YOU BARGAINED FOR, HUH?
NO WAY ARE YOU PUNKS MAKING IT TO THE AIRPORT!
ONE QUESTION, FAT BOY.
WHO SAYS WE'RE GOING TO THE AIRPORT?
OH, SON OF A--
--BAAAAAAAAA!
QUADROCOPTER TO H.A.R.D. CORPS. ANY PROBLEMS?
NOT ANYMORE.

THE TEMPLE.
SOON AFTERWARD.
OKAY.
MAYBE YOU CAN'T TELL FROM LOOKING AT ME, BUT I AM IN A *WICKED* BAD MOOD.
I KNOW YOU *MASTER BUILDERS* DON'T LIKE ME. I DON'T LIKE YOU, EITHER. BUT I'M *REALLY* PISSED AT THOSE JERKS WHO SHOT YOUR PLACE UP AND TOOK MY PAL.
MAKING YOU TELL ME WHO THEY ARE WOULD VENT FRUSTRATION, BUT WASTE TIME. BUT IF THAT'S HOW YOU WANNA PLAY IT--
NOT NECESSARY. THEY WORK FOR *PROJECT RISING SPIRIT.*
THOSE GUYS AGAIN. THEY'RE LIKE A SUMERIAN SOCIAL DISEASE.
UH, SO I HEAR.
IN POINT OF FACT, NO ONE IN THE SECT IS TERRIBLY FOND OF THEM. AND THEY KNOW IT. FRANKLY WE WERE HOPING YOU TWO WOULD DESTROY EACH OTHER ON THE FREEWAY.
I CAN TRY TO LEARN WHERE THEY'VE TAKEN YOUR FRIEND, BUT I CAN'T MAKE ANY PROMISES.
WHEN ME AND ARCHER BROKE INTO AREA 51, WE FOUND OUT THEIR MAIN BASE IS IN NEVADA. I'M GUESSING IT'S THERE.
CALL ARCHER'S PEOPLE AT PROMISED LAND AMUSEMENT PARK. I'M GONNA NEED A PLANE AND SOME GUYS.
AND A CHANGE OF CLOTHES...

PROJECT RISING SPIRIT RESEARCH FACILITY THETA.

NEVADA.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.

WELL DONE. KEEP HIM SEDATED.

I WANT A HUNDRED ALARMS SHRIEKING BLOODY MURDER IF HE SHOWS THE *TINIEST* SIGN OF WAKING UP.

YES, SIR, MR. KOZOL.

HEY. TAKE IT EASY. KOZOL'S A SCUMBAG, NO NEWS THERE.
BUT YOU NEED HIM... FOR NOW, AT LEAST. WITHOUT THOSE AMINO ACID TRANSFUSIONS THEY GIVE YOU, YOU'LL *DIE*, RIGHT?
...RIGHT.

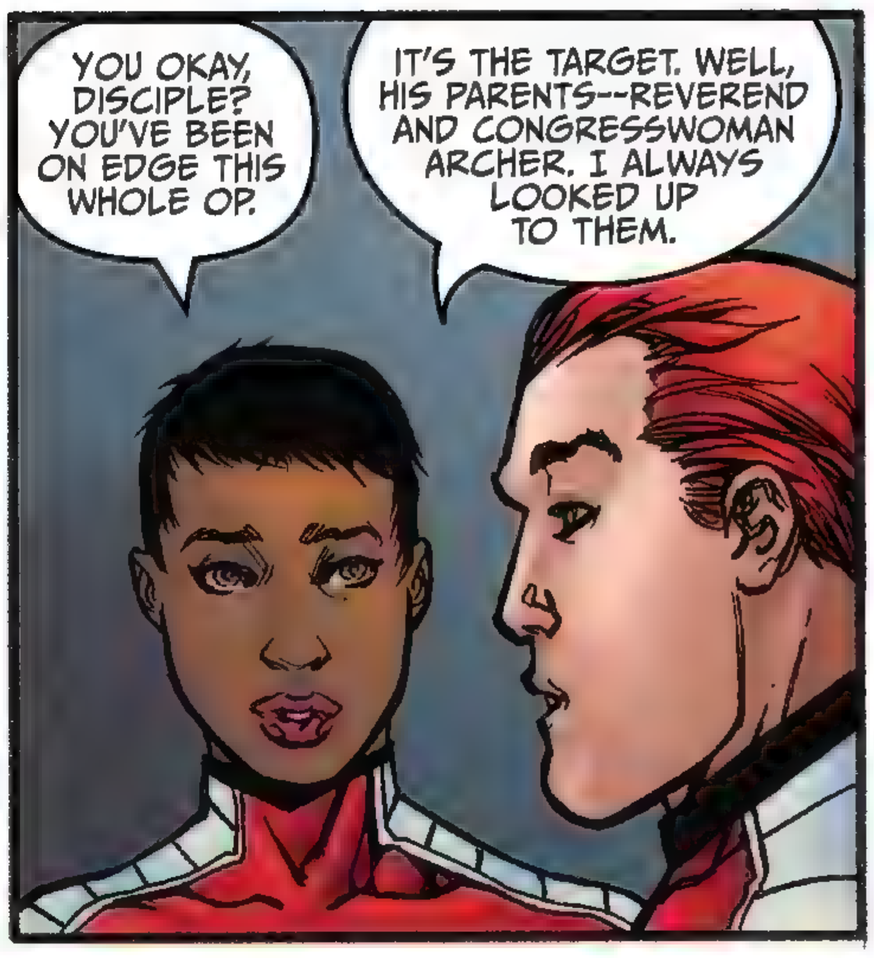
AND HE'S NOT WRONG ABOUT THE *GENERATION ZERO* KIDS. THEY'RE ALREADY MARKED. P.R.S., HARADA... THEY'RE GONNA BE WEAPONS FOR SOMEBODY.
OTHER THAN MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T HAPPEN TO *OTHER* KIDS, THERE'S NOT MUCH GUYS LIKE YOU AND ME CAN DO FOR 'EM, IS THERE?

HARD TO ARGUE WITH THAT.

SO ARE WE DONE? 'CAUSE I'D LIKE TO SEE MY FAMILY SOMETIME THIS WEEK.
NO. SORRY. I NEED THE FULL TEAM HERE, STANDING GUARD, IN CASE THE TARGET STARTS TO WAKE UP.

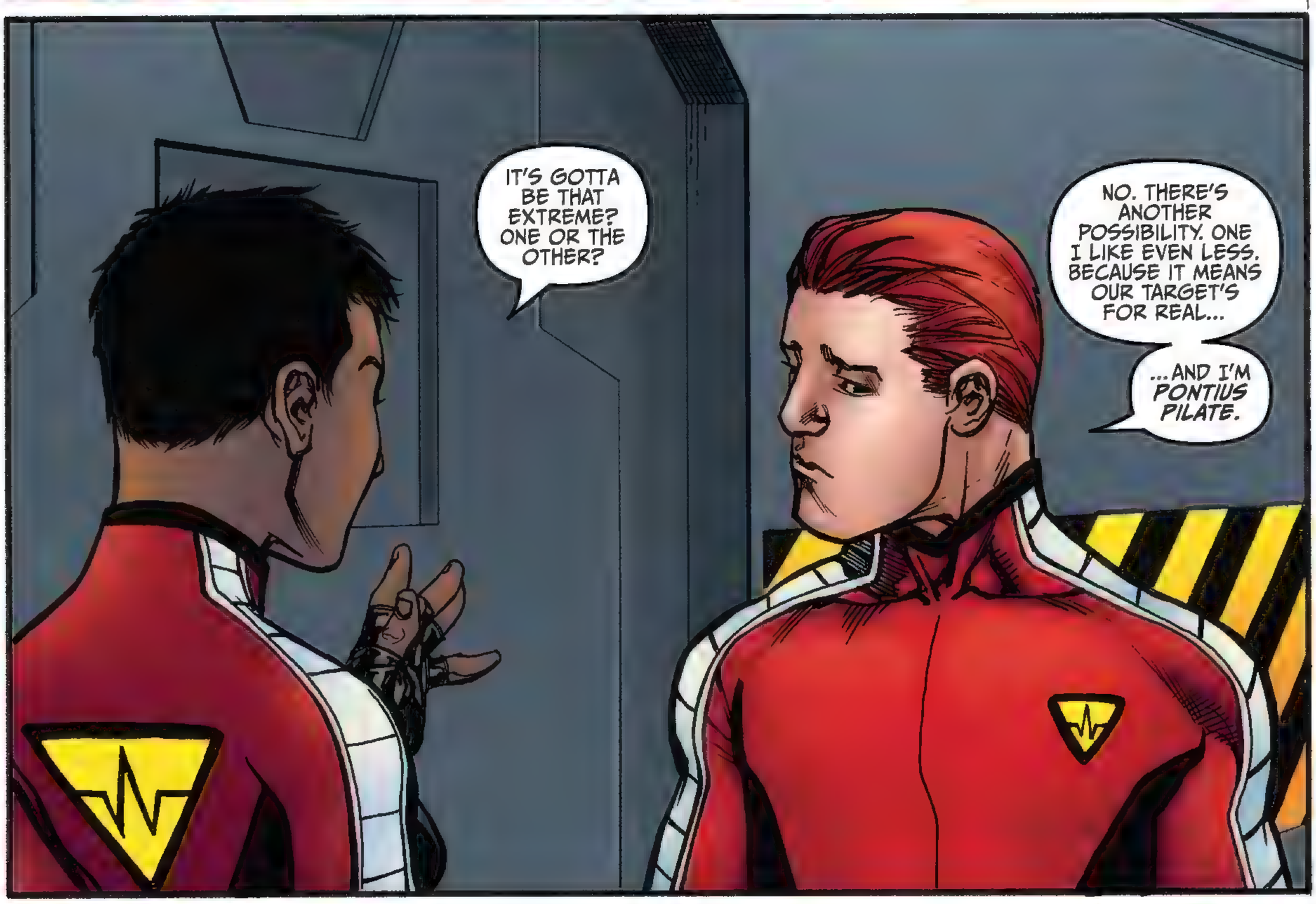
UNTIL HIS MIND'S WIPED, THAT KID'S A LIVE NUKE. I KNOW KOZOL CONSIDERS HIM AN INVESTMENT. BUT THESE ARE MY ORDERS:
THOSE ALARMS GO OFF, PUT A BULLET IN HIS HEAD.

GRANITE, DISCIPLE, STAY BY THE DOOR. THE REST OF YOU, COVER ALL ACCESS POINTS. IN AND OUT.


YOU OKAY, DISCIPLE? YOU'VE BEEN ON EDGE THIS WHOLE OP.
IT'S THE TARGET. WELL, HIS PARENTS--REVEREND AND CONGRESSWOMAN ARCHER. I ALWAYS LOOKED UP TO THEM.

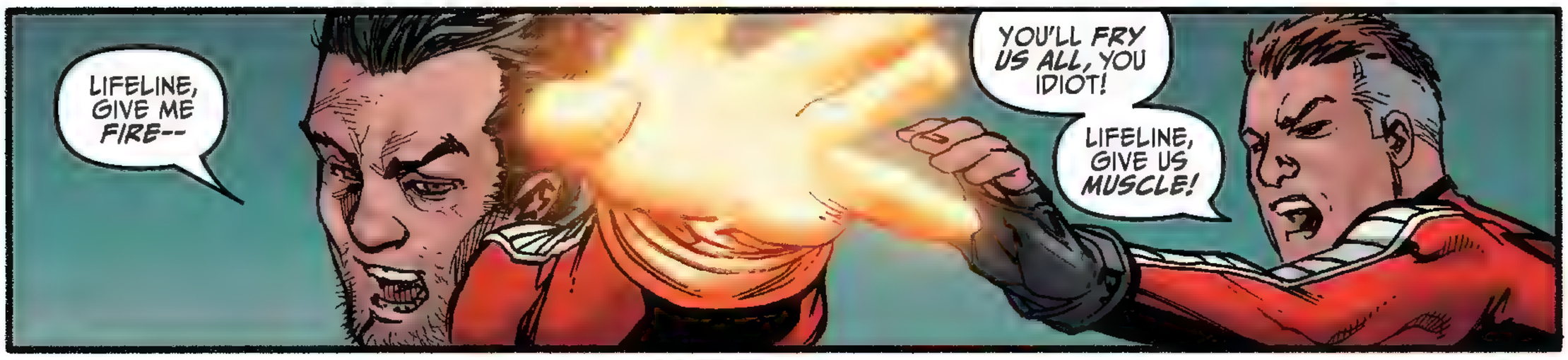
THE WORLD'S A NASTY PLACE. IF YOU'RE ONLY FIGURING THAT OUT NOW, YOU'VE LED A CHARMED LIFE.
NO, I KNEW IT. BUT I BELIEVED THERE WERE *GOOD* PEOPLE, TOO.
BUT WITH THIS MISSION, AND WHAT WE SAW IN NIGERIA, I'M STARTING TO WONDER IF ALL THERE REALLY IS...

...ARE THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE FAITH BECAUSE IT'S THE ONE THING THEY CAN CLING TO IN A TERRIFYING WORLD OF CHAOS AND PAIN...
...AND OTHERS WHO *USE* IT TO MAKE THEMSELVES *RICHER.*

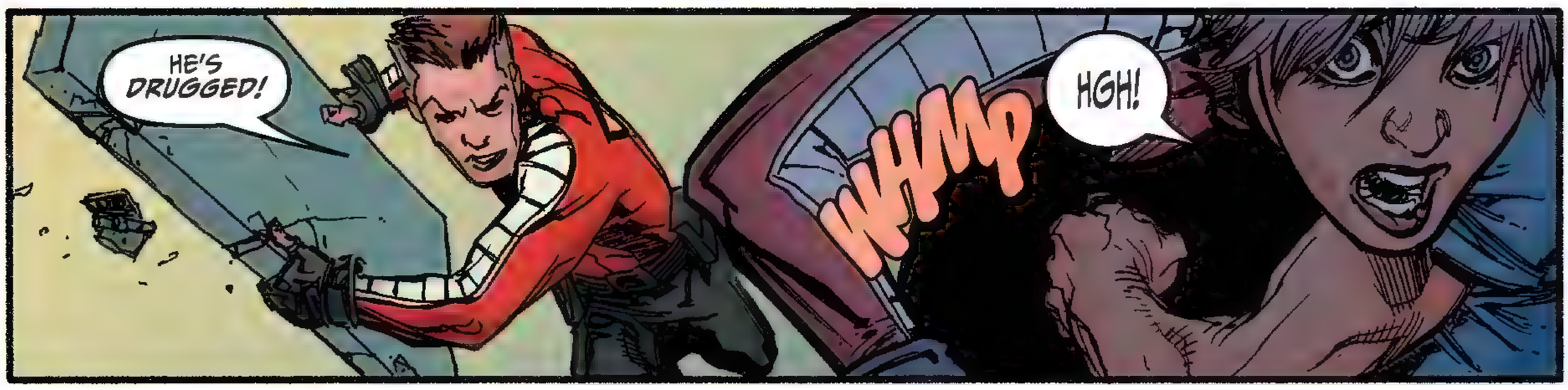

IT'S GOTTA BE THAT EXTREME? ONE OR THE OTHER?
NO. THERE'S ANOTHER POSSIBILITY. ONE I LIKE EVEN LESS. BECAUSE IT MEANS OUR TARGET'S FOR REAL...
...AND I'M *PONTIUS PILATE.*

READINGS?
E.E.G. SHOWS DELTA WAVE ACTIVITY GREATER THAN FIFTY PERCENT. STAGE FOUR. SUBJECT IS IN DEEP SLEEP--
URK!
KRAK
WH--SOUND ALARMS!
SOUND-- GNG!
WHAK
THWOK
YOU HEAR THAT?
H.A.R.D. CORPS TO MEDICS, COME IN.
H.A.R.D. CORPS! WE'RE GOING IN!
I DON'T HEAR ANY ALARMS...

WHRAK
GFF!


LIFELINE, GIVE ME FIRE--
YOU'LL FRY US ALL, YOU IDIOT!
LIFELINE, GIVE US MUSCLE!

THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE!
THAPP


HE'S DRUGGED!
WHMP
HGH!

HE SHOULD BE OUT!
MY GOD. LOOK AT HIS FACE!
KRAKCH

HE IS OUT!
Sleep•walk•ing
Sleepwalkers arise from the slow wave sleep stage in a state of low consciousness and perform activities as benign as walking to the bathroom or as hazardous as homicide

FRED VAN LENTE | PERE PÉREZ | DAVID BARON
ARCHER & ARMSTRONG
VALIANT
#19
MISSION: IMPROBABLE
HEY, GUYS! CALL ME ARMSTRONG!
WHEN YOU'VE BEEN AROUND AS LONG AS ME, YOU KNOW YOU GOTTA LIVE IT UP OR THE RIDE JUST ISN'T WORTH IT!
AND YOU'VE GOTTA TAKE CARE OF YOUR FRIENDS SO YOUR FRIENDS TAKE CARE OF YOU. RIGHT NOW MY BEST BUDDY OBADIAH ARCHER'S IN HOT WATER WITH SOME REAL BAD DUDES. GUY NAMED BLOODSHOT? AND THE H.A.R.D. CORPS?
MAN, I DON'T KNOW WHAT A BLOODSHOT IS... BUT MAKE MINE A DOUBLE!
LaRosa
MW
$3.99

ALL RIGHT, PEOPLE, WE'RE THE HEADS OF A WORLDWIDE FREAKING CONSPIRACY, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND WHEREVER A BUNCH OF SUPER-POWERED STORMTROOPERS SQUIRRELED AWAY ONE SKINNY KID!

I WANT YOU TO PULL IN EVERY SPY, EVERY POLITICIAN WHO OWES YOU FAVORS, COPS, GENERALS, C.E.O.s, THE BAKER STREET IRREGULARS, WHOEVER.
I KNOW THESE PROJECT RISING SPIRIT PUKES LIKE TO HANG OUT IN NEVADA--
--I HAVE TO ASSUME BECAUSE OF THE LEGAL PROSTITUTION. CAN'T BLAME THEM, THAT WOULD BE MY FIRST CHOICE, REALLY.
OF COURSE IF YOU MASTER BUILDER SCHMUCKS HADN'T ATTACKED HIM, THIS BLOODSHOT CHARACTER NEVER COULD'VE GOTTEN THE DROP ON HIM IN THE FIRST PLACE!
OUR DEEPEST APOLOGIES, HE-WHO-IS-NOT-TO-BE-NAMED--OUR GUARDS MADE AN ERROR IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE!
THEIR BEER AND WINGS RATIONS HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED INDEFINITELY.

WHATEVER. YOU GUYS'LL BE READY TO THROW DOWN WITH THESE JOKERS ONCE WE FIND 'EM?

JA! MY POCKETS BULGE MIT GOLD KRUGERRANDS!

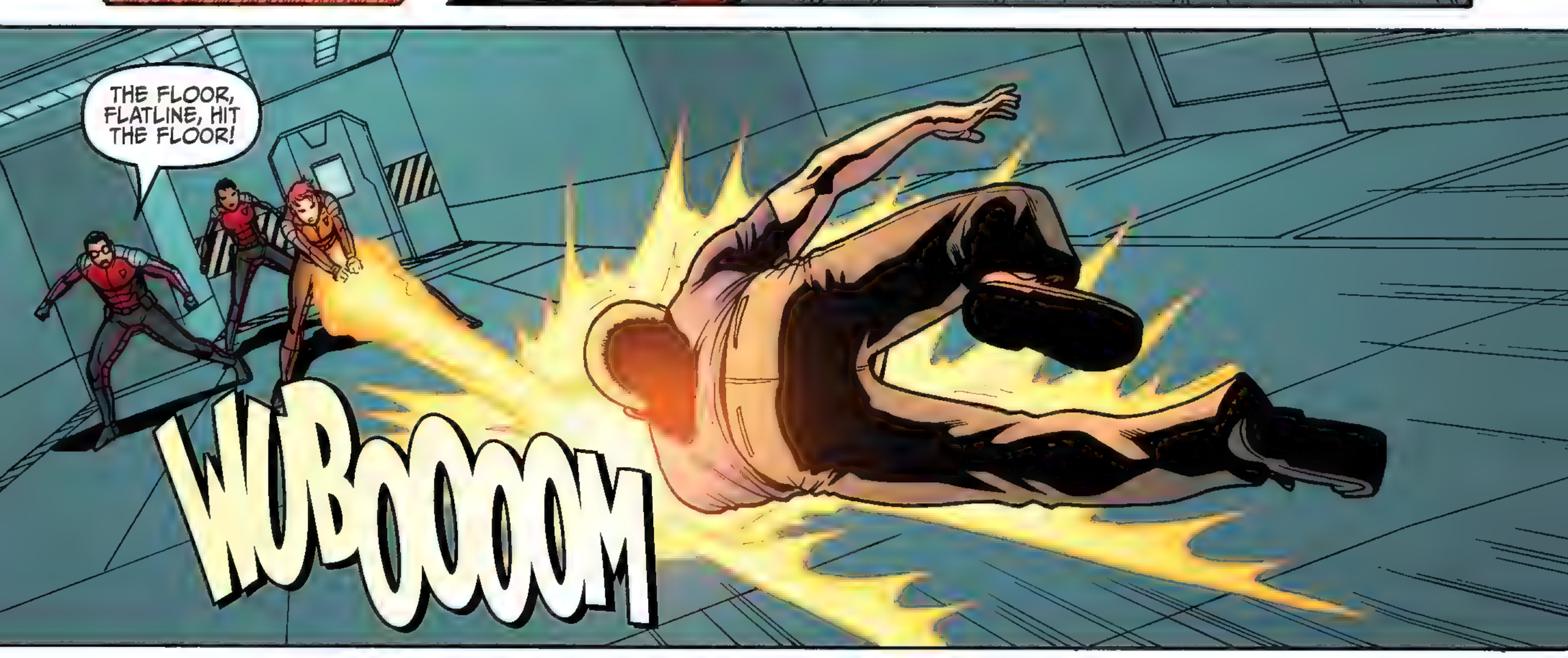
I BROUGHT OUR BOOK OF SECRET HANDSHAKES-- EACH ONE MORE FIENDISHLY CLEVER THAN THE LAST!

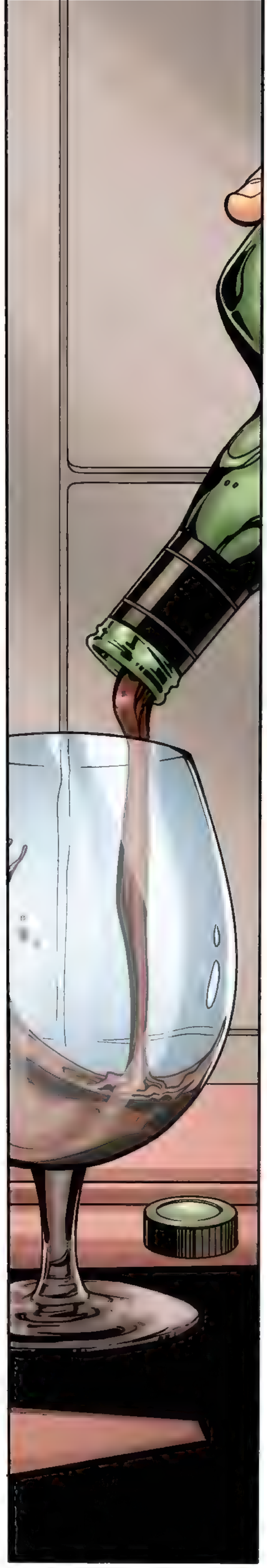
I GOT SOME PAPER TOWELS!

NO OFFENSE, BUT YOU PEOPLE ARE ALL IDIOTS.

"YOU GUYS ARE JUST LUCKY I KNOW ARCHER CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF."
LIFELINE! GIVE ME--NEURAL SPIKE--NOW!
NOTHING--NOTHING'S HAPPENIN--
GIVE ME--SLEEP!
DAMMIT, VAGABOND, HE'S ALREADY ASLEEP!*
*We could tell you how Archer got here and why he's sleepwalking, but that means you wouldn't go out right now and buy BLOODSHOT and H.A.R.D. CORPS #20. And we want your money.
-MGMT
ZWOK
LIFELINE, GIVE ME STRENGTH!
LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY...
hwa rang do a/k/a "The Way of the Flowering Knights" is a fighting style named after elite child soldiers from Korea's Three Kingdoms Period
WHA--
NGH
KRRNNCCH

HE SEES US! AND HIS EYES ARE BARELY OPEN!
THAT'S SO CREEPY!
R-RIGHT. WELL S-SLEEPWALKERS ARE IN SLOW-WAVE SLEEP, OR STAGE 3 AND 4 NON-REM SLEEP...
GIVE ME SOME INFORMATION I CAN ACTUALLY USE, GENIUS!
DON'T BOTHER WITH PURELY MENTAL POWERS LIKE NEURAL SPIKE--THEY WON"T AFFECT HIM!
JUST STICK WITH VIOLENCE!
LIFELINE! STUN RAM!
VMMMMM
HE'S TOO FAST--


THE FLOOR, FLATLINE, HIT THE FLOOR!
WUBOOOOM

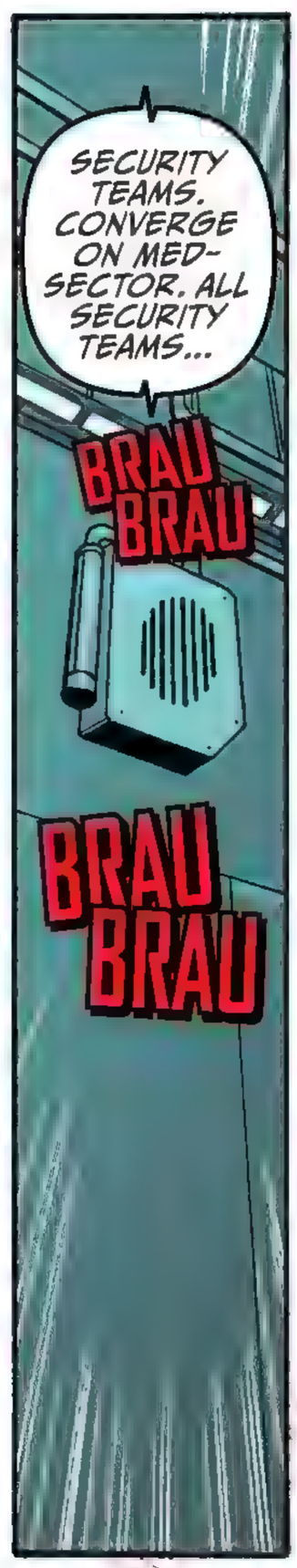


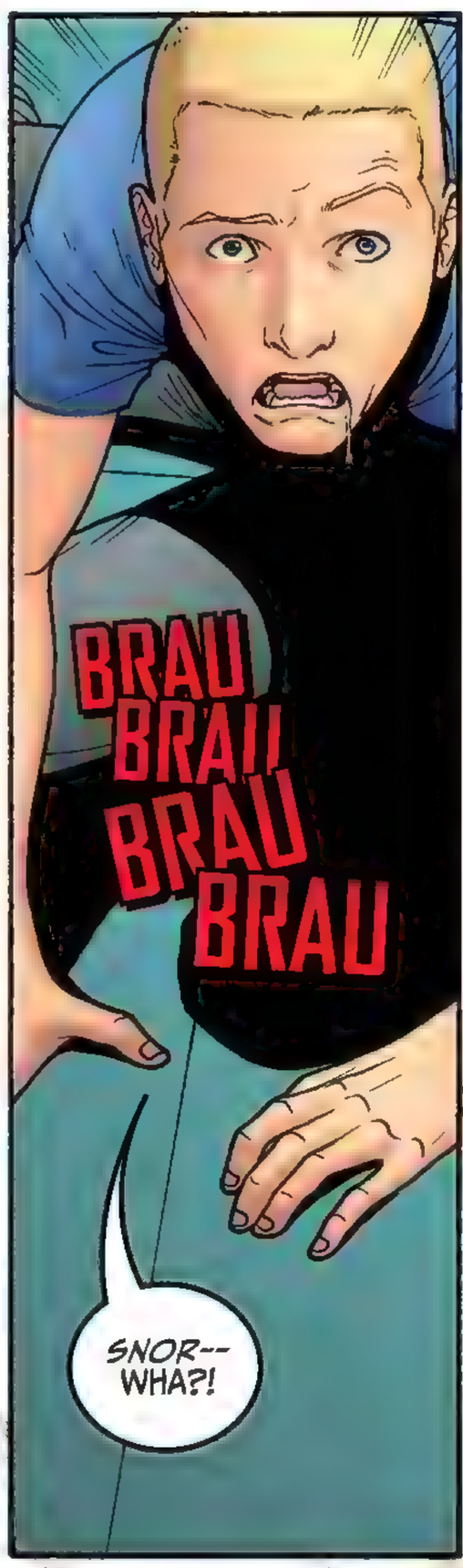
AT LAST.
VICTORY.

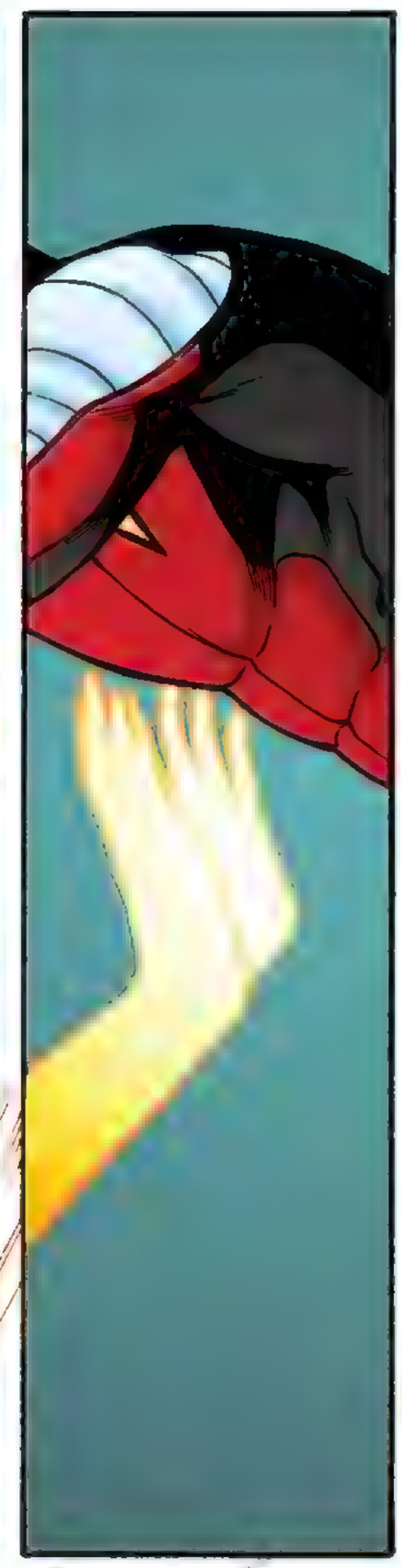
MR. KOZOL?
LIFELINE, PLEASE TELL ME YOU'RE CALLING WITH GOOD NEWS.
I MIGHT DIE FROM SHOCK.

WELL... PRODIGAL HASN'T KILLED ANY OF THE MED TEAM OR H.A.R.D. CORPS SINCE HE ESCAPED CONTAINMENT.
THAT'S GOOD NEWS, ISN'T IT?

SOUND THE GENERAL ALARM, PLEASE.



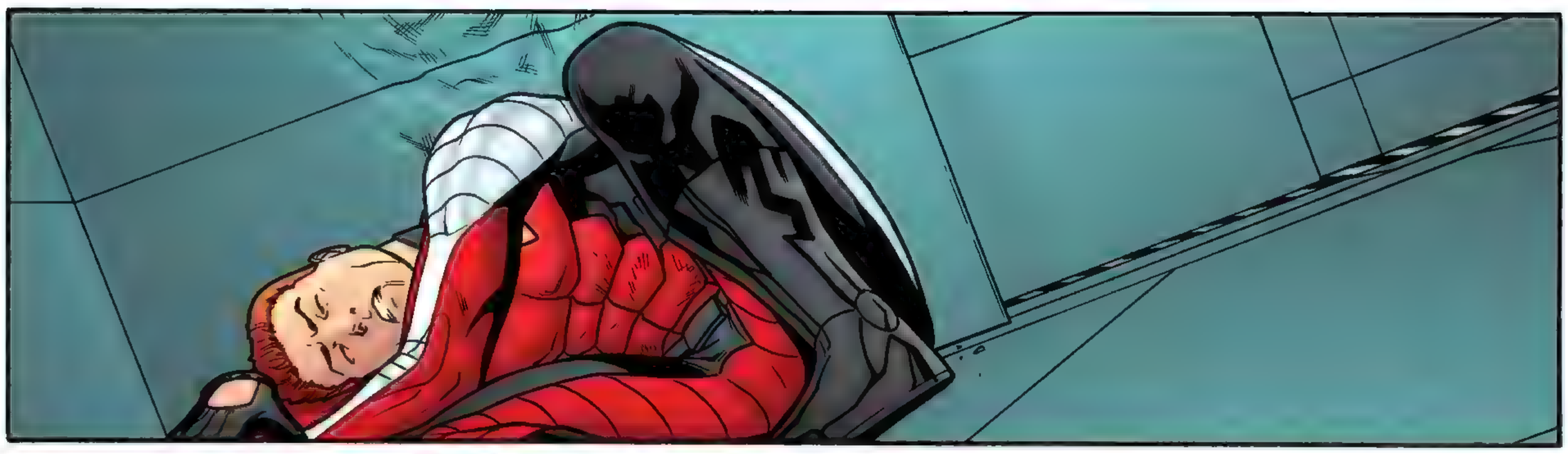




stun ram is H.A.R.D. Corps nomenclature for a concentrated wave of telekinetic force that

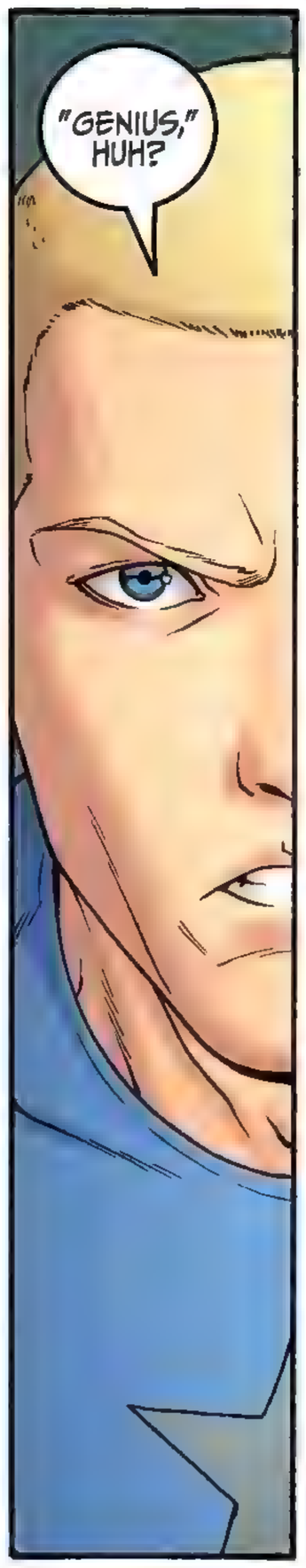
AGGGHH!

BOOM



LIFELINE, GIVE ME ARC CH--
GRANITE, WAIT!
WHY?!

DON'T USE ANY *NEW* POWERS--YOU'RE JUST *TEACHING* HIM HOW TO *KICK OUR ASS*--
THEN WHAT DO *YOU* HAVE IN MIND, GENIUS?
MY STRATEGY IS SIMPLE--


"GENIUS," HUH?

GUESS YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE *SMART* ONE.
GAHHH!
NO!
neu•ral spike is H.A.R.D. Corps nomenclature for a concentrated telepathic "sting" directed at

SIR.
I COULD DETECT YOU IN MY *SLEEP.*

YOUR MAGIC CLOAK CAN'T BLOCK AIR CURRENTS.
HNF
YOU HURT GENIUS!
I'LL KILL YOU! LIFELINE! SEQUENCE PI!
FLATLINE! STAY OUTTA MY LINE OF FIRE!
MUSCLE! SHIELD! AND--
FIRE!
BUDDA BUDDA
BUDDA BUDDA
shield is H.A.R.D. Corps nomenclature for a protective envelope of telekinetic force wrapping around the psiot

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO *TELL* YOU PEOPLE?

POWERS FOR *DEFENSE.*

GUNS FOR OFFENSE.

NOW FALL BACK.

SIR, WE CAN'T REACH DISCIPLE. HE AND THE DOCTORS ARE--

YOU HAVE YOUR ORDERS!

FALL BACK!

WE'RE SEALING OFF THIS SECTOR!

WHOMMP

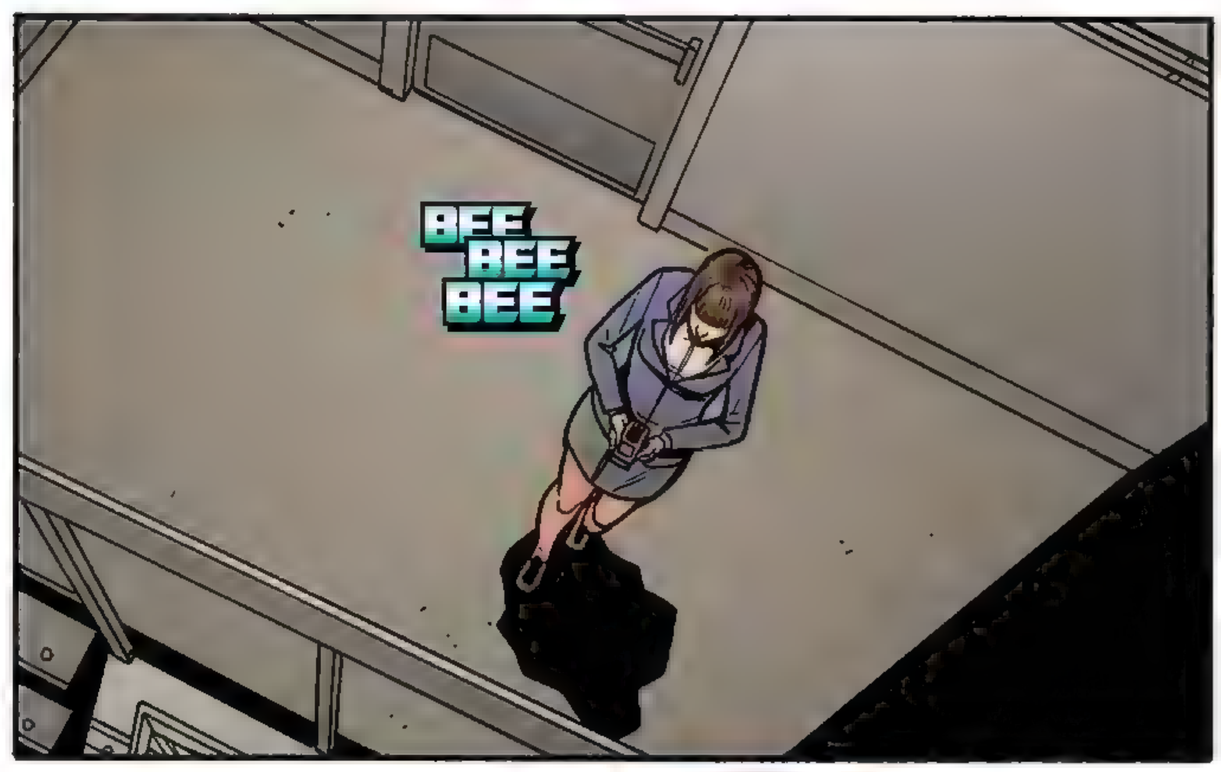
GREAT! NOW HE HAS *HOSTAGES.*

THEY'RE ONLY HOSTAGES IF WE GIVE A ROSY RAT'S ASS WHAT *HAPPENS* TO THEM.

AND THAT'S NOT EXACTLY *UP* TO US...

...*IS* IT, KOZOL?

SECURITY TEAMS. CONVERGE ON MED-SECTOR. ALL SECURITY TEAMS...
BRAU BRAU BRAU BRAU

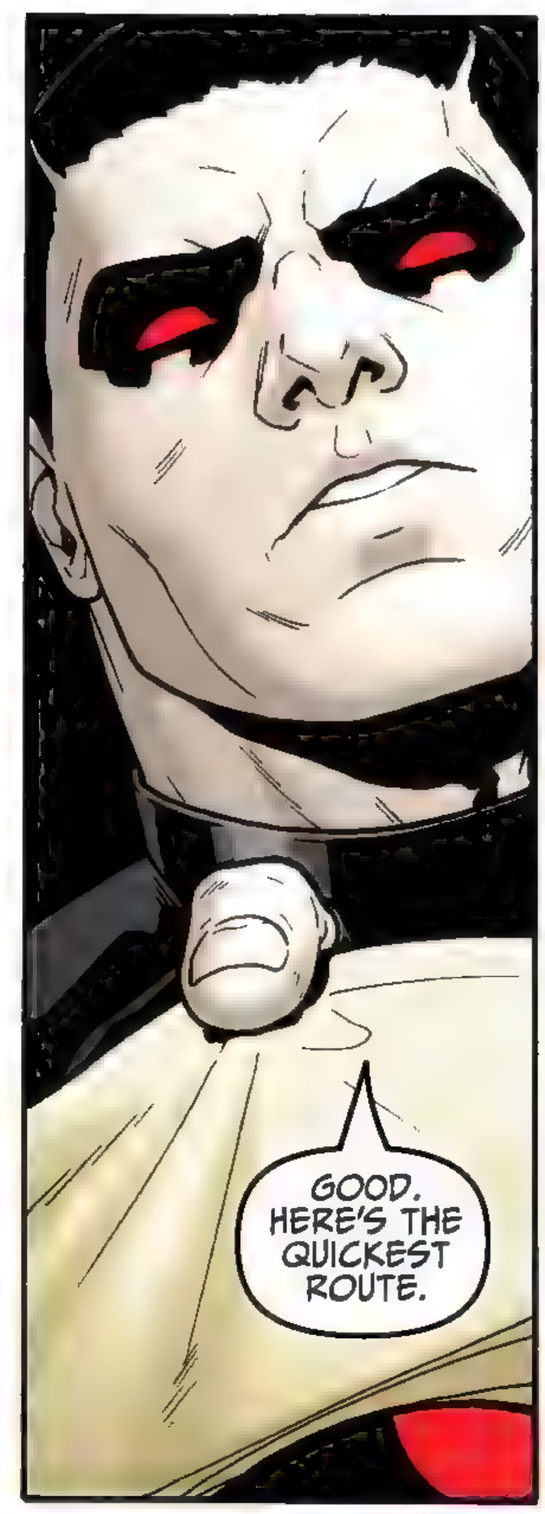

BEE BEE BEE

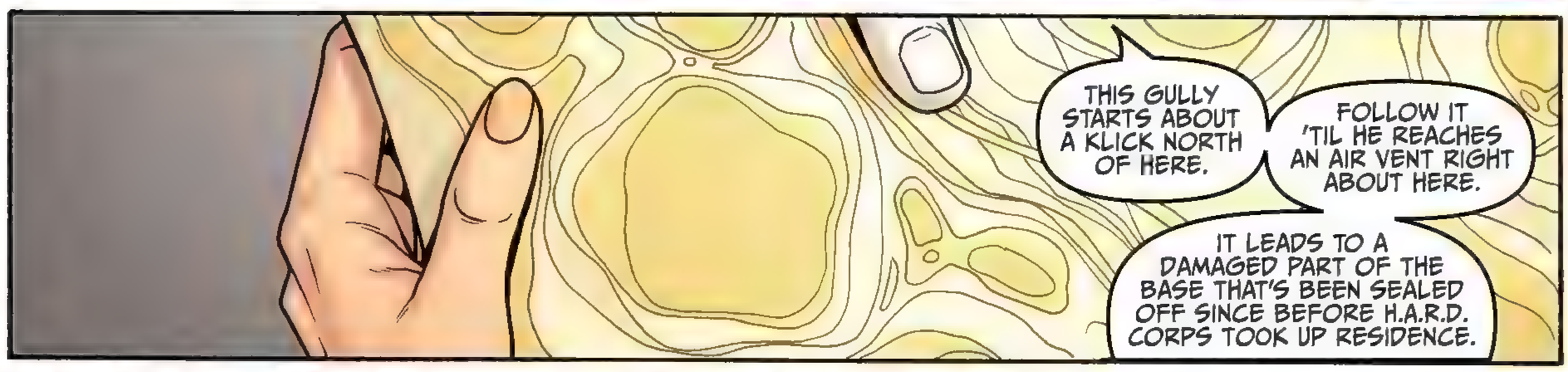
VERONICA, RIGHT?

YOU'RE ONE OF KOZOL'S LAWYERS.
HE CAN BOUNCE ALL SORTS OF ILLEGAL AND UNETHICAL IDEAS OFF YOU AND YOU CAN'T TELL A SOUL THANKS TO CLIENT/ATTORNEY PRIVILEGE.
YOU'RE ALSO A TRAITOR.
THAT'S NONSENSE. W-WHY--
AFTER OUR LAST DANCE, PROJECT RISING SPIRIT FIGURED OUT HOW TO BLOCK THEM IF ANY OF MY NANITES GOT INTO THEIR SYSTEM.
SO I PUT THEM ON NOTICE TO ALERT ME TO ANY TRANSMISSIONS THAT CIRCUMVENTED THE P.R.S. GRID.
LIKE THAT FANCY SATELLITE PHONE OF YOURS.
YOU'VE MADE A COUPLE CALLS ALREADY TO THE CINCINNATI AREA CODE.
WHERE ARCHER'S CREATIONIST AMUSEMENT PARK IS.
YOU WORK FOR HIS SECT?
I, UH...
NOW DON'T RUIN THIS PROMISING NEW RELATIONSHIP BY LYING TO ME.
ALSO, I'LL SHOOT YOU IN THE KNEECAP.
IT WON'T KILL YOU, BUT IT'S PAINFUL ENOUGH YOU'LL WISH IT HAD.
YOU'RE BLUFFING.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO FIND OUT.

...
I SERVE THE BLACK BLOC-- NOW PART OF MASTER ARCHER'S GLORIOUS NEW DOMINION.

I WANTED TO LEARN WHAT YOUR PLAN OF ATTACK WAS AGAINST THEM, BUT I COULDN'T GET *CLOSE* ENOUGH... UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.
YOU'RE TELLING THE BIG GUY, ARMSTRONG, HOW TO GET HERE, RESCUE HIS BUDDY, RIGHT?
WELL--

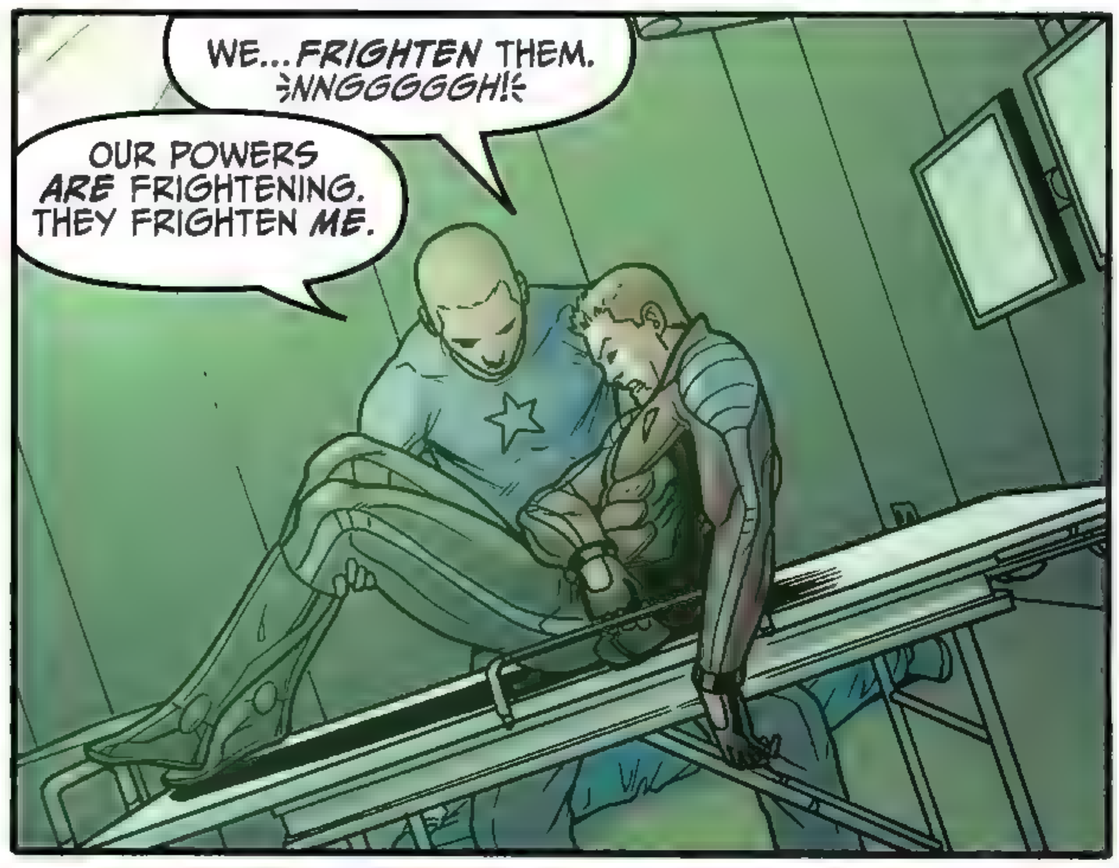

GOOD. HERE'S THE QUICKEST ROUTE.

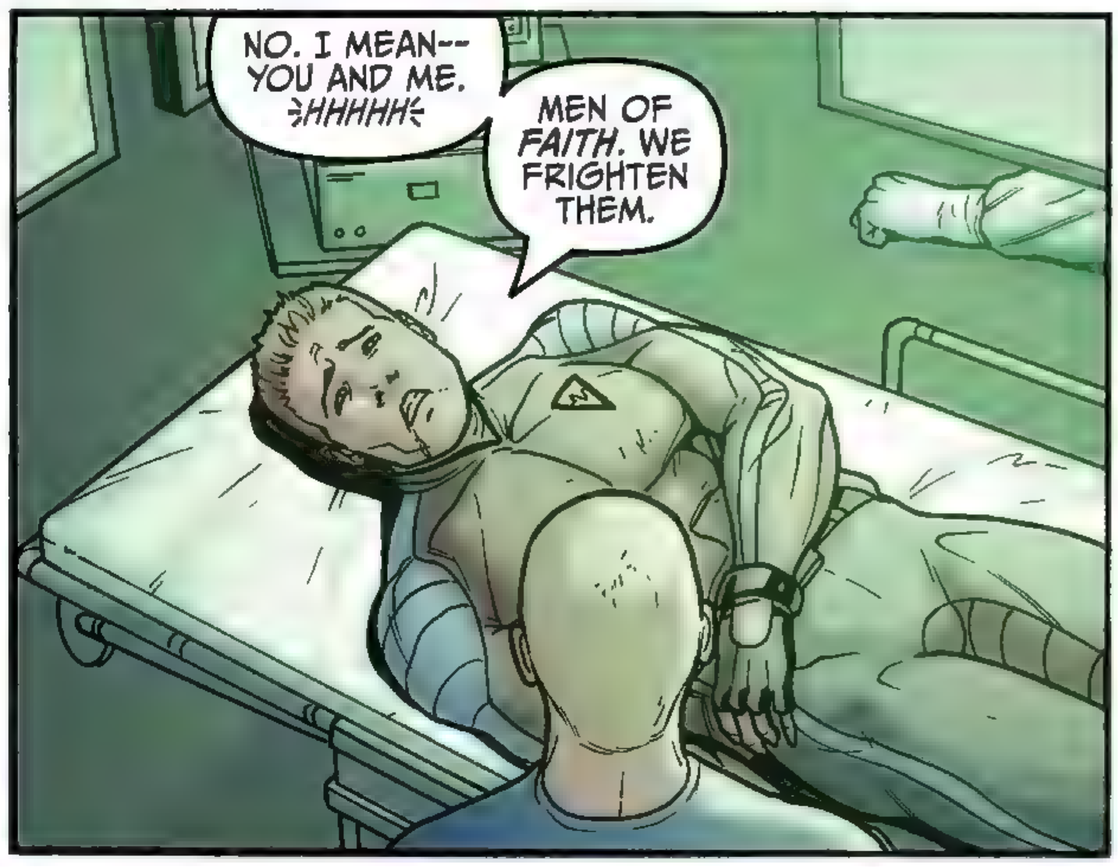

THIS GULLY STARTS ABOUT A KLICK NORTH OF HERE.
FOLLOW IT 'TIL HE REACHES AN AIR VENT RIGHT ABOUT HERE.
IT LEADS TO A DAMAGED PART OF THE BASE THAT'S BEEN SEALED OFF SINCE BEFORE H.A.R.D. CORPS TOOK UP RESIDENCE.

NORMALLY THEY'D BE MONITORING THAT SIDE CLOSELY, BUT THE KID'S DIVERTED MOST OF SECURITY TO SICK BAY.
THAT'S... THAT'S A HELLUVA LOT BETTER THAN WHAT I WAS GOING TO RECOMMEND.
BUT-- WHY SHOULD I TRUST YOU? WHY WOULD YOU HELP US?

WHO SAID IT'S *YOU* I'M HELPING?

THEY TOLD US... YOU'RE A DANGEROUS MAN. ⊰HHHHH⊱
I SUPPOSE I AM AT THAT, SIR.


WE... FRIGHTEN THEM. ⊰NNGGGGGH!⊱
OUR POWERS ARE FRIGHTENING. THEY FRIGHTEN ME.


NO. I MEAN-- YOU AND ME. ⊰HHHHH⊱
MEN OF FAITH. WE FRIGHTEN THEM.

BECAUSE WE HAVE SURRENDERED PURSUIT OF SELF TO SOMETHING HIGHER THAN OURSELVES.
AND IF WE CAN DO IT... THEY CAN DO IT. ⊰HHHHHHHH⊱
OHHH...

BUT THEY LACK THE COURAGE TO THROW OFF THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD.
I KNOW THAT SOUNDS LIKE PRIDE, BUT IT'S ONLY FACT. ⊰KOF KOF KOF KOF⊱

I WAS A MAN OF FAITH BECAUSE THAT'S WHO MY PARENTS WERE, AND WHO MY FAMILY WAS.
I NEVER QUESTIONED IT; I NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO.

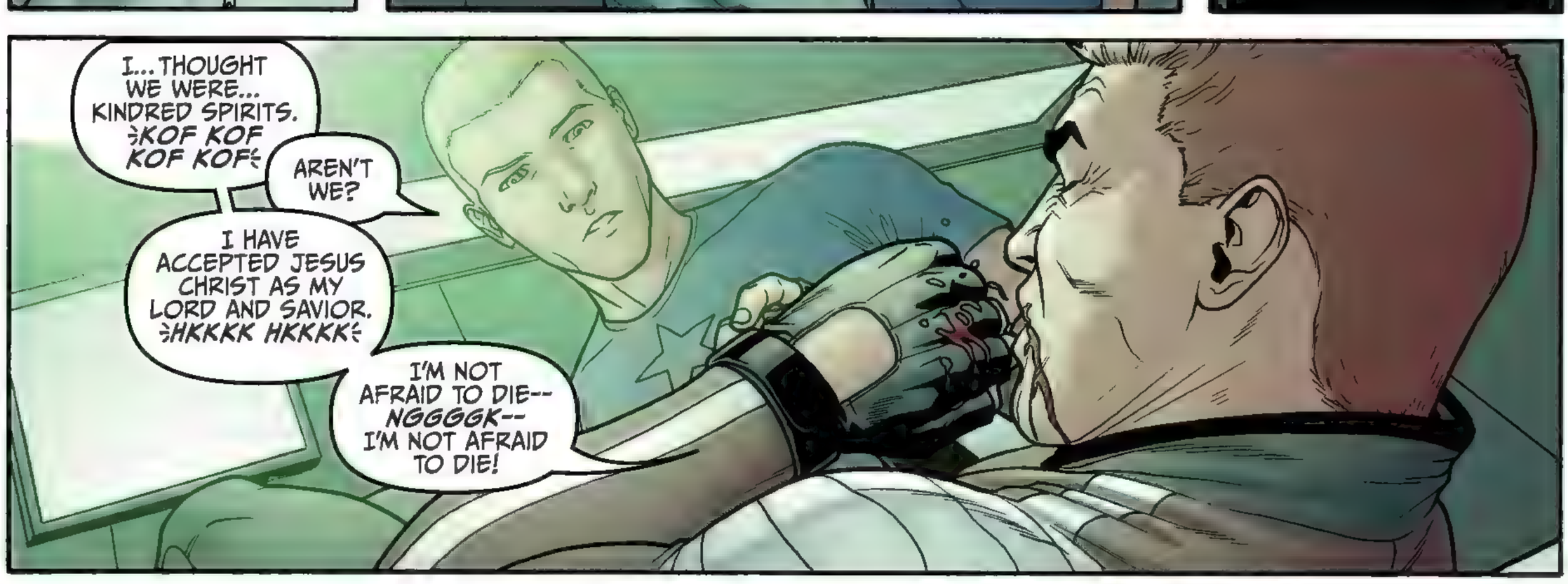
SINCE I LEFT HOME I HAVE TRAVELED TO ONE END OF THIS WORLD AND BACK, AND MET MANY PEOPLE, WITH MANY DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS.
AND I HAVE COME TO A CONCLUSION:

THERE IS *NOTHING* GREATER THAN THE WORLD.
IT IS BEAUTIFUL AND DIVINE UNTO ITSELF.

AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES THE PEOPLE LIKE YOUR KOZOL AND MY PARENTS WHO TRY TO *OWN* IT SO DESPICABLE.
THOSE WHO ABUSE THE BELIEFS OF OTHERS DO NOT RENDER THOSE BELIEFS FALSE.

TRUE.

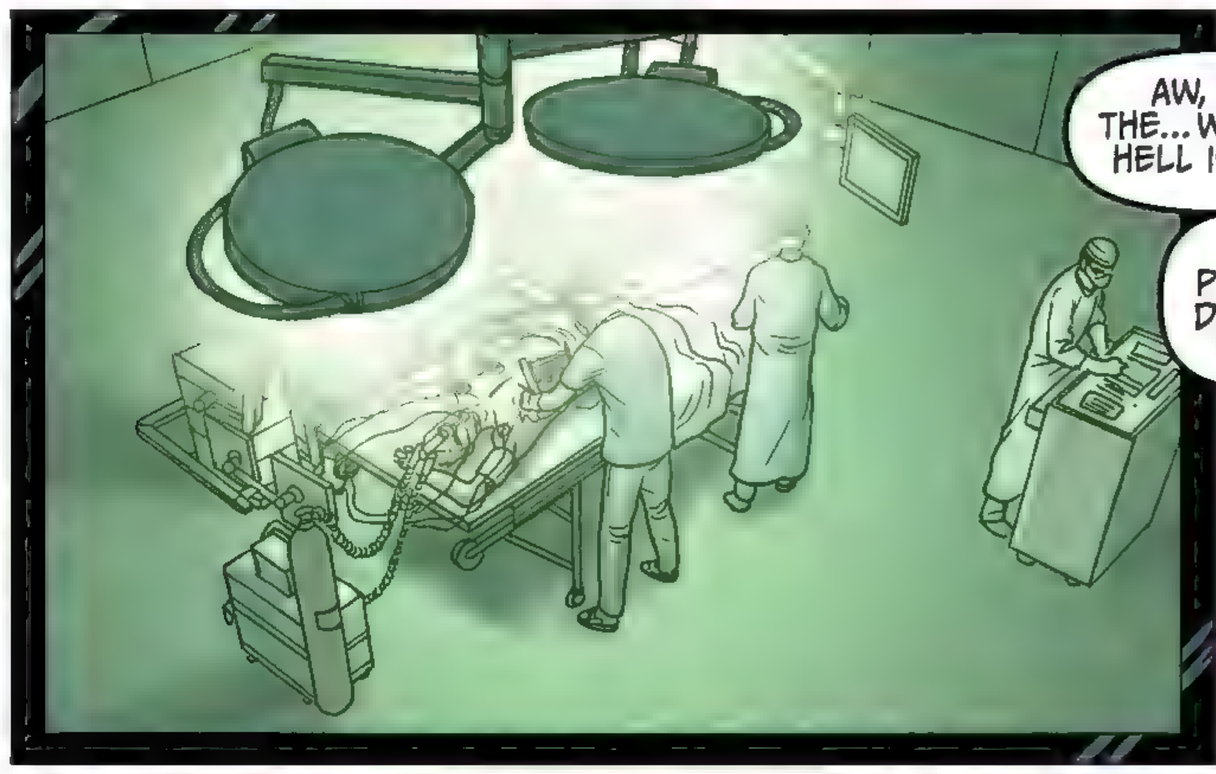
BUT I BELIEVE I WILL STOP BELIEVING. IF ONLY FOR A LITTLE WHILE.
JUST TO SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE.


I...THOUGHT WE WERE... KINDRED SPIRITS. ⊰*KOF KOF KOF KOF*⊱
AREN'T WE?
I HAVE ACCEPTED JESUS CHRIST AS MY LORD AND SAVIOR. ⊰*HKKKK HKKKK*⊱
I'M NOT AFRAID TO DIE-- *NGGGGK*-- I'M NOT AFRAID TO DIE!

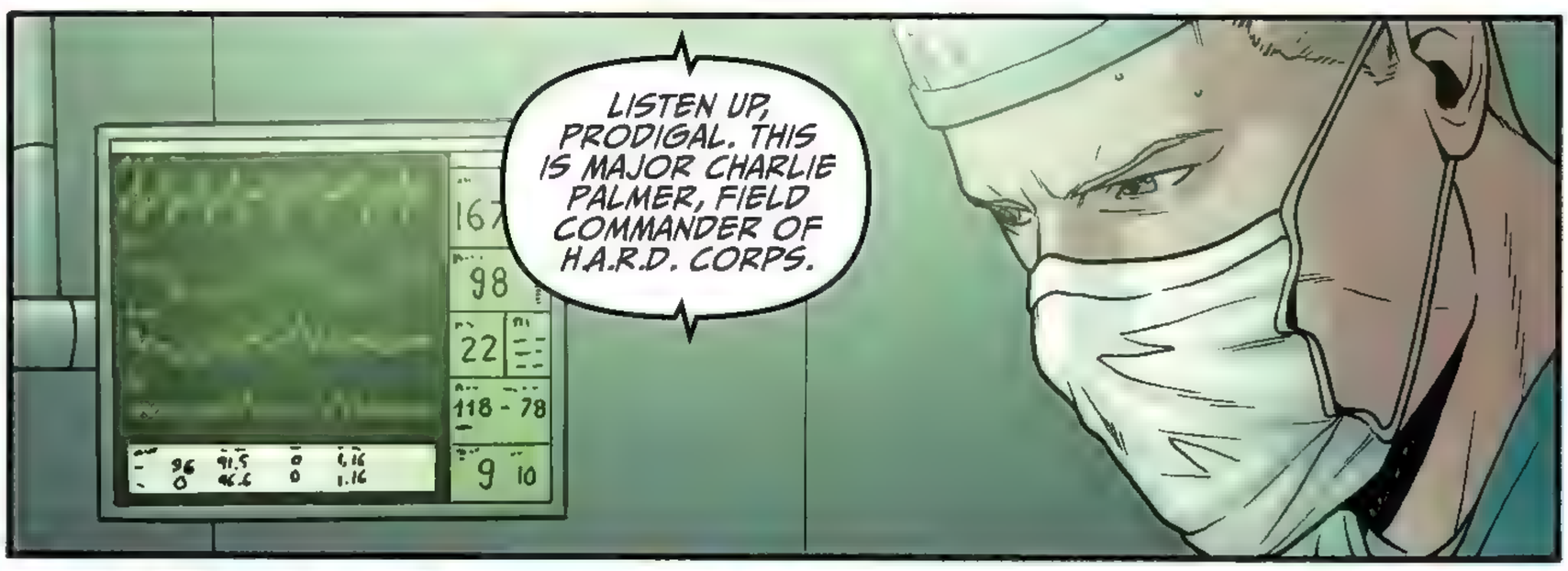
tho•ra•cot•om•y is the surgical opening of the pleural cavity

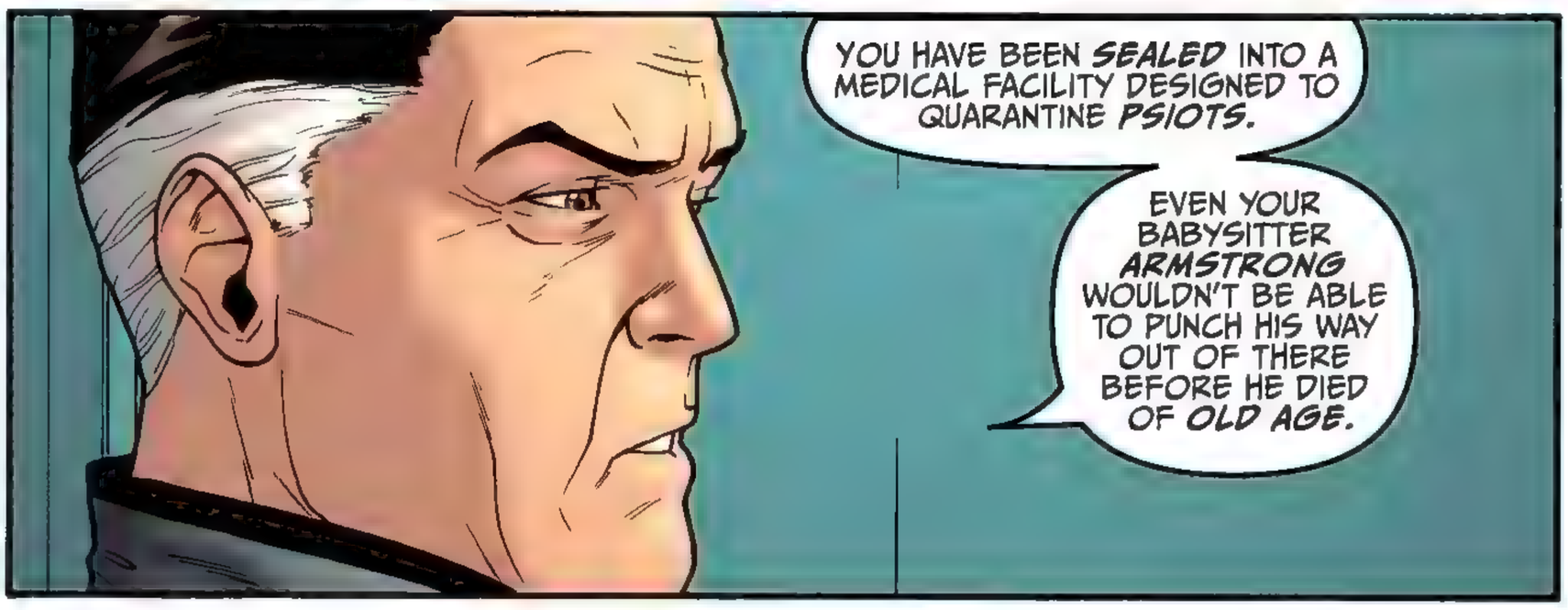
GENIUS! GENIUS, WAKE UP!
UH... WHAAAA... WHAT?

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I DON'T... I DON'T HURT... NOWHERE...
YOU! GET ME EYES IN THERE!


AW, WHAT THE... WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?
HE'S PLAYING DOCTOR NOW?

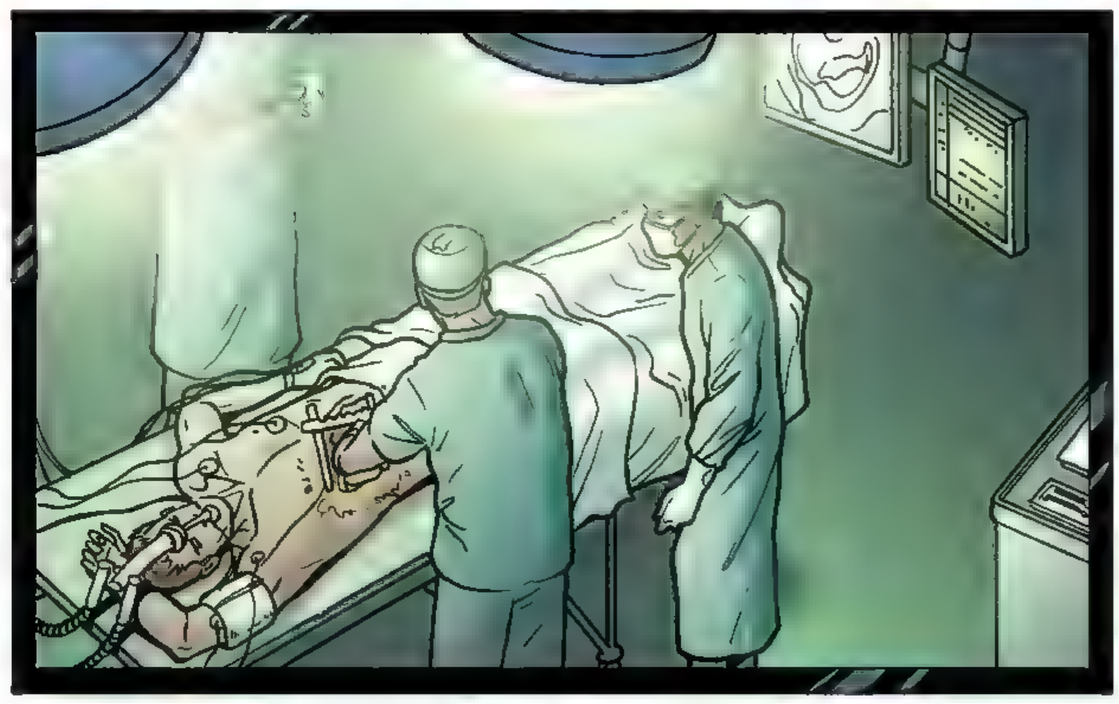
CAN I TALK TO HIM THROUGH THE P.A.?
YEAH, BUT IT'LL BE ONE-WAY ONLY.
EVEN BETTER.


LISTEN UP, PRODIGAL. THIS IS MAJOR CHARLIE PALMER, FIELD COMMANDER OF H.A.R.D. CORPS.

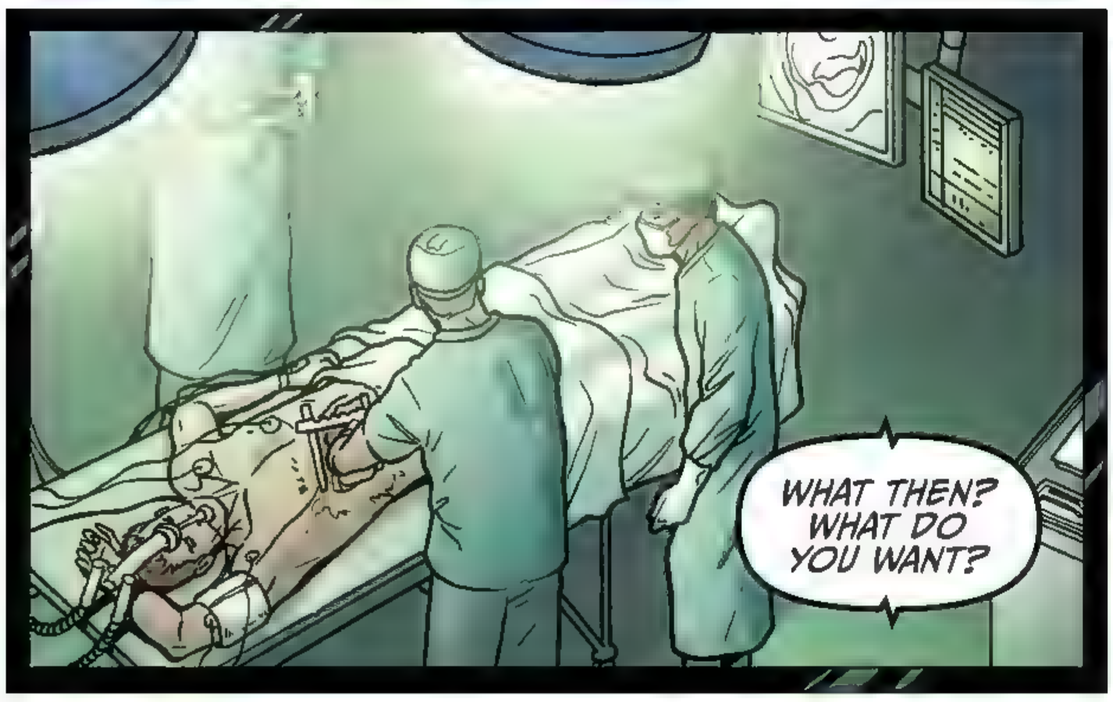

YOU HAVE BEEN *SEALED* INTO A MEDICAL FACILITY DESIGNED TO QUARANTINE *PSIOTS*.
EVEN YOUR BABYSITTER *ARMSTRONG* WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO PUNCH HIS WAY OUT OF THERE BEFORE HE DIED OF *OLD AGE*.

NOW I'M NOT TOO THRILLED WITH WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE DOING TO ONE OF MY MEN IN THERE.
HE NEEDS REAL PROFESSIONALS LOOKING AFTER HIM.
SO WHAT DO YOU NEED TO LET HIM OUT OF THERE, WITH THE DOCS?

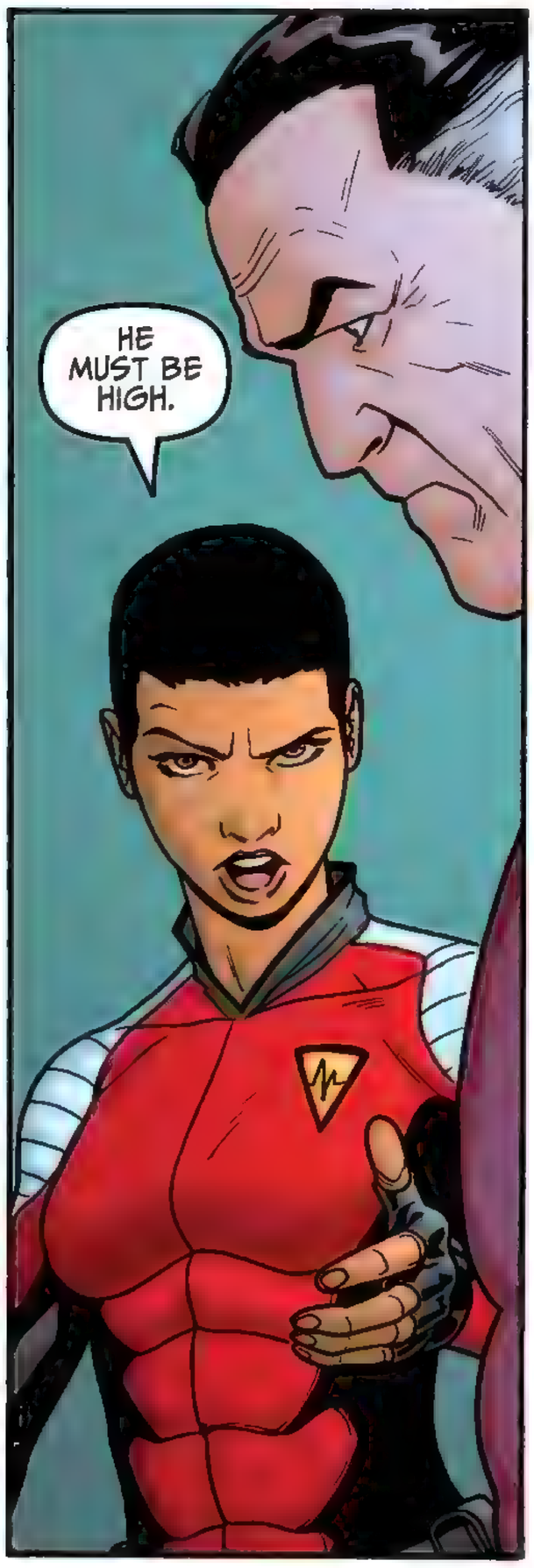
HOW ABOUT YOUR FILE? YOUR FULL BACKGROUND, BEFORE P.R.S. GOT THEIR HANDS ON YOU? THE NAMES OF YOUR BIRTH PARENTS?
WHAT DO YOU SAY? GOOD TRADE?



NO


WHAT THEN? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

KOZOL

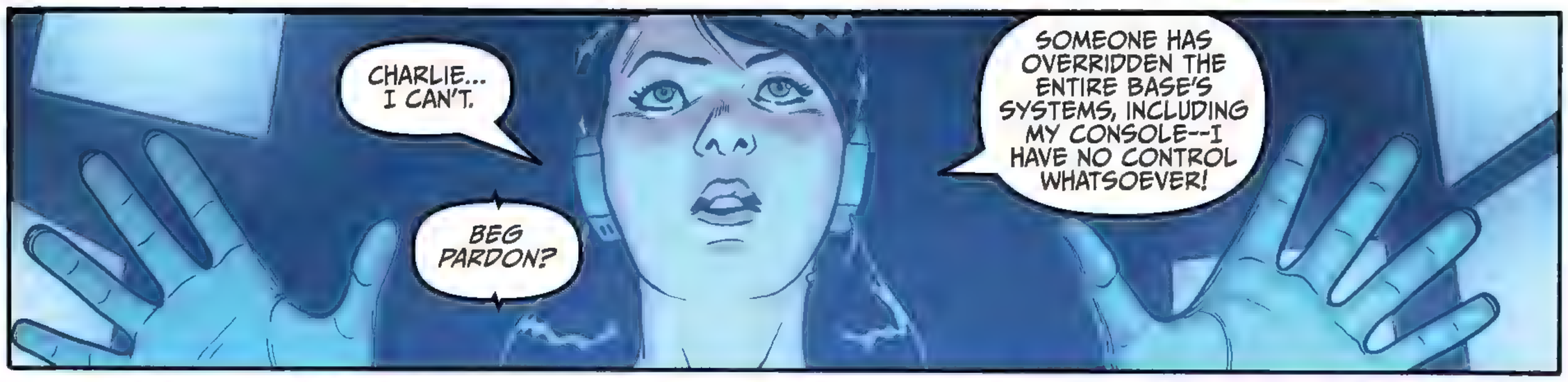

HE MUST BE HIGH.

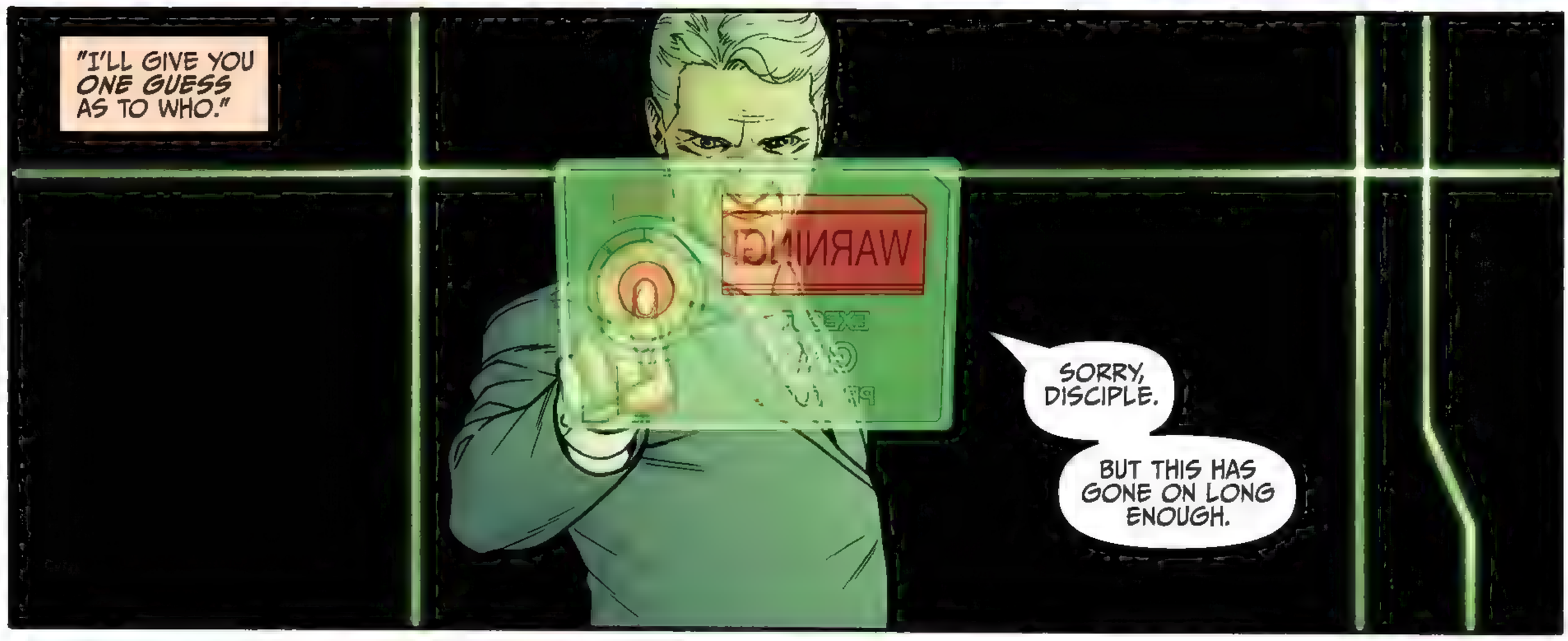
VAGABOND. GET THE BOSS.
IF HE RESISTS, *HURT* HIM. *LOTS*.
ON IT.
AND COME TO THINK OF IT, FIND FRICKING *BLOODSHOT*. HE SHOULD BE *HERE*.

YOU MUST BE HIGH!
IT'S A NEGOTIATING TACTIC.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, GENIUS? IS THIS A GOOD IDEA?
MAYBE WE SHOULD SLIP IN THERE IN *GHOST MODE*, CATCH 'IM BY SURPRISE?

I'LL CHOOSE *FOR* YOU!

WHAMM


CHARLIE... I CAN'T.
BEG PARDON?
SOMEONE HAS OVERRIDDEN THE ENTIRE BASE'S SYSTEMS, INCLUDING MY CONSOLE--I HAVE NO CONTROL WHATSOEVER!


"I'LL GIVE YOU ONE GUESS AS TO WHO."
SORRY, DISCIPLE.
BUT THIS HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH.

SSSS

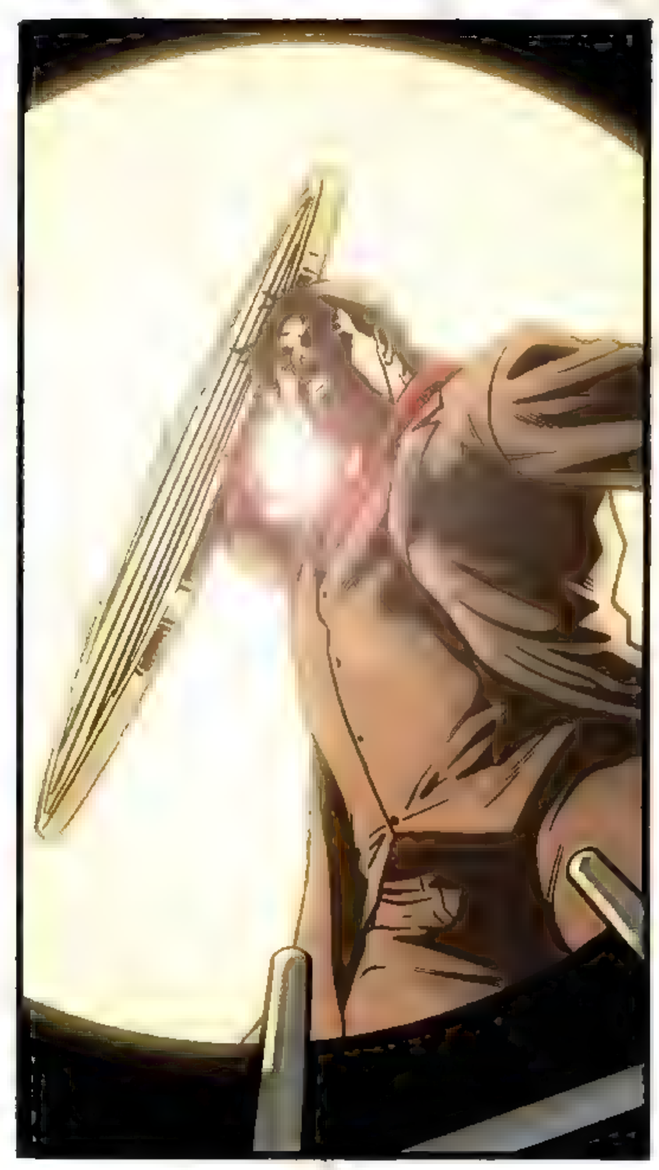
OH, NO... NOT AGAIN...

THUD
BEE
BEE
BEE

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

SURE YOU DON'T WANT *US* TO JUMP WITH YOU, HE-WHO-IS-NOT-TO-BE-NAMED?
EHHH... NO-- I KNOW YOU THINK YOUR GIRL VERONICA IS ON THE UP-AND-UP, BUT I GOTTA MAKE SURE THIS ISN'T A TRAP!
PARK THIS THING AT THE NEAREST AIRSTRIP AND WAIT FOR ORDERS!

IF I DON'T COME BACK--
BURN MY PORN!



THEY USED TO KEEP *KIDS* HERE--*SPECIAL* KIDS, LIKE YOUR BUDDY.

I BROKE THEM OUT AND TRIED TO LEAD THEM TO SAFETY.

TURNS OUT I ONLY LED THEM TO ANOTHER *CAGE*.

P.R.S. KNOWS WHERE THAT CAGE IS, AND THEY'RE NOT GOING TO TELL ME WILLINGLY.

WITH YOUR HELP, I'M GOING TO *TAKE* THAT INFORMATION FROM THEM.

AND FREE ARCHER IN THE PROCESS.

WHAT DO YOU SAY, ARMSTRONG?

PARTNERS?

VALIANT

#21

MISSION: IMPROBABLE 4

CHRISTOS GAGE | JOSHUA DYSART | TOM RANEY | GINA GOING

BLOODSHOT and H.A.R.D. CORPS

PROJECT RISING SPIRIT RESEARCH FACILITY THETA.
"RUMPUS ROOM" PSIOT TRAINING AREA. DECOMMISSIONED.
OW!
GAH!
STOP IT!
YOU STOP!

YOU HEAL FAST.
SHNK

YOU TOO.
KRNCHH

STILL HURTS.
SQUIT

ME TOO.

YOU KIDNAPPED MY BUDDY. NOW I'M SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE YOU WANT TO SET HIM FREE? YOU THINK I'M A SUCKER, BLOODSHOT?

I MAY BE THE GUY WHO SOLD MANHATTAN FOR TWENTY-FOUR BUCKS, BUT GUESS WHAT?

IT DIDN'T BELONG TO ME!

THWAMM

SPTT-- THAT'S GONNA HURT A WHILE.
BLAM

NNH... THAT TOO.
HOW DO YOU HANDLE THE PAIN?
BLAM

I DRINK. DON'T YOU?
CAN'T. THE NANITES IN MY BLOOD PREVENT INTOXICATION.

SERIOUSLY?
OH, MAN.

NO WONDER YOU'RE SUCH AN ASS.
C'MERE. I BET YOU NEED A HUG.

ALL RIGHT. I'LL LISTEN. YOU GOT ONE MINUTE TO CONVINCE ME YOU'RE ON THE LEVEL.
PROJECT RISING SPIRIT USED ME AS A BRAINWASHED LIVING WEAPON.
NOW MY MIND'S MY OWN, BUT THEY'VE STILL GOT LEVERAGE OVER ME.

YOU HELP ME TAKE THAT AWAY--HELP ME GET SOMETHING I NEED--AND I'LL DO THE SAME FOR YOU.
GET YOUR FRIEND BACK, SEND YOU BOTH ON YOUR WAY, AND MAKE SURE P.R.S. NEVER BOTHERS YOU AGAIN.

HOW DO I KNOW IT'S NOT A TRAP?
I COULD'VE SET AN AMBUSH *HERE* IF I'D WANTED.
THAT'S TRUE.

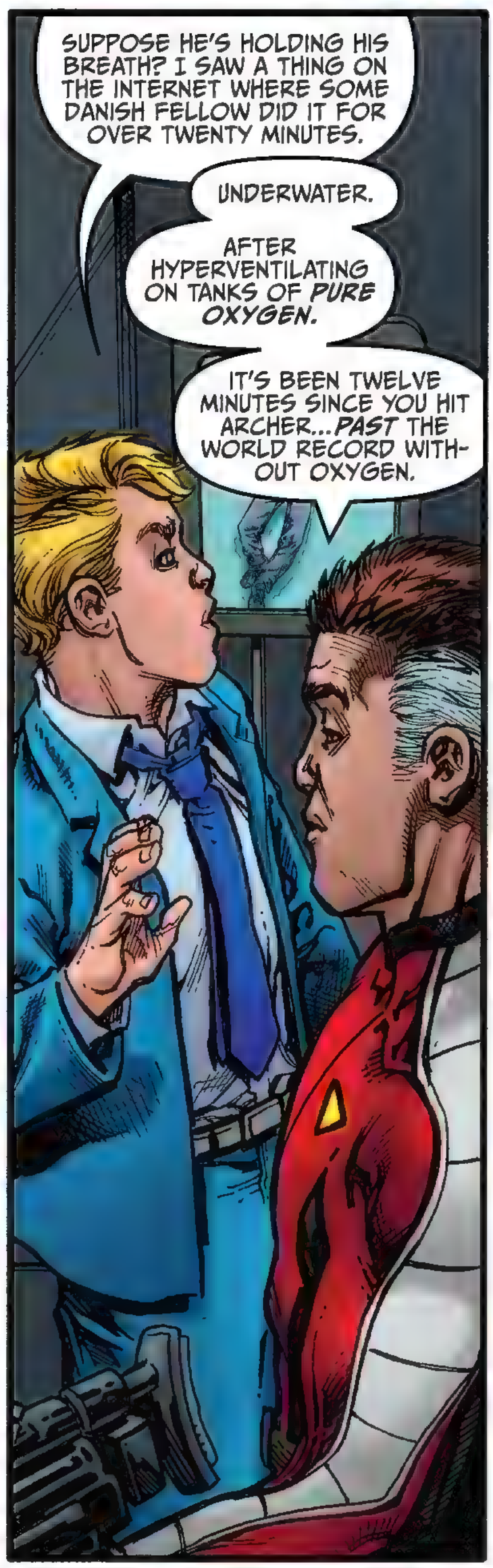
LOOK, THIS IS A DECOMMISSIONED AREA, SO THERE'S ONLY ONE SECURITY CAMERA, AND MY NANITES ARE SCRAMBLING IT.
BUT WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME. I JUST GOT AN ALERT. YOUR PAL'S FIGHTING H.A.R.D. CORPS RIGHT NOW. SO WHAT DO YOU SAY?
I'LL THROW IN A BOTTLE OF PENFOLDS GRANGE HERMITAGE THAT KOZOL HAS STASHED IN HIS OFFICE.

SOLD.

MED-SECTOR.
I REMAIN UNCONVINCED, MAJOR PALMER.
DAMN IT, KOZOL, I WANT THAT DOOR OPENED *NOW!* *DISCIPLE* NEEDS IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION!
A MINUTE AGO YOU WERE SAYING YOU DIDN'T GIVE A "ROSY RAT'S ASS" ABOUT HIM.

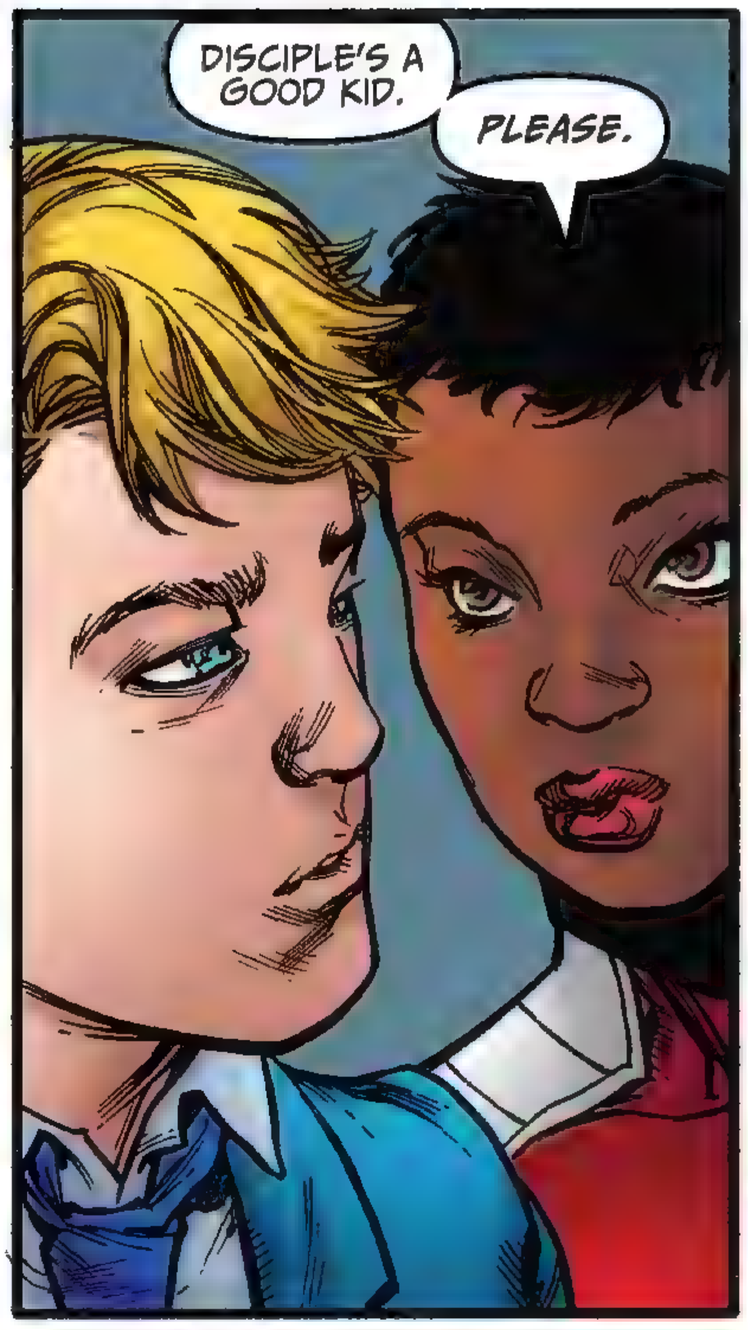
I WAS *LYING*. I WASN'T ABOUT TO RISK THE REST OF MY TEAM TO SAVE ONE MAN...
...ESPECIALLY IF IT MEANT RELEASING A GUY WHO CAN COPY ALL OUR POWERS.

"BUT ARCHER'S UNCONSCIOUS NOW. KOZOL GASSED HIM. THE THREAT'S NEUTRALIZED."


SUPPOSE HE'S HOLDING HIS BREATH? I SAW A THING ON THE INTERNET WHERE SOME DANISH FELLOW DID IT FOR OVER TWENTY MINUTES.
UNDERWATER.
AFTER HYPERVENTILATING ON TANKS OF *PURE OXYGEN.*
IT'S BEEN TWELVE MINUTES SINCE YOU HIT ARCHER...*PAST* THE WORLD RECORD WITHOUT OXYGEN.

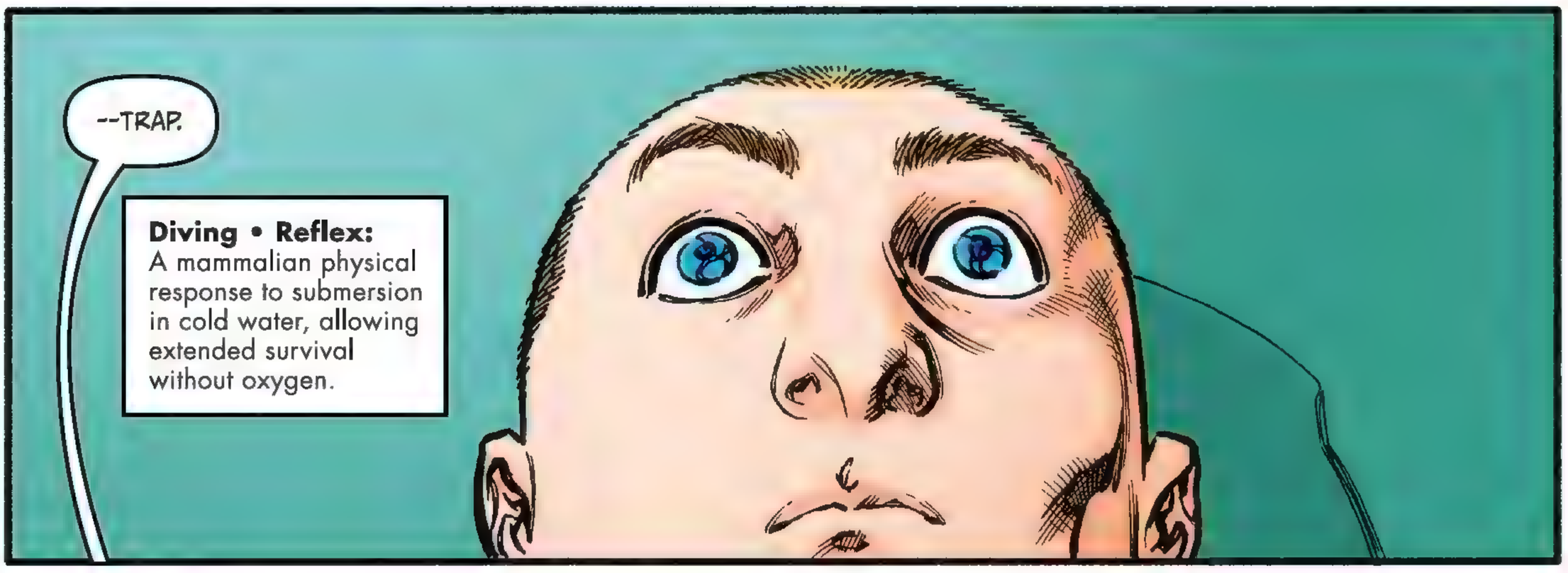
"AND DISCIPLE'S *DYING* IN THERE."

HE DID THAT SLEEPWALKING THING BEFORE. BEAT US ALL. HE COULD DO IT AGAIN.
ACTUALLY, GENIUS, HE COULDN'T.
THE GAS ISN'T JUST A SEDATIVE, IT CONTAINS A PARALYTIC. IF HE INHALED IT, HE'S IMMOBILE. BUT STILL...
MR. KOZOL-- MORRIS--


DISCIPLE'S A GOOD KID.
PLEASE.

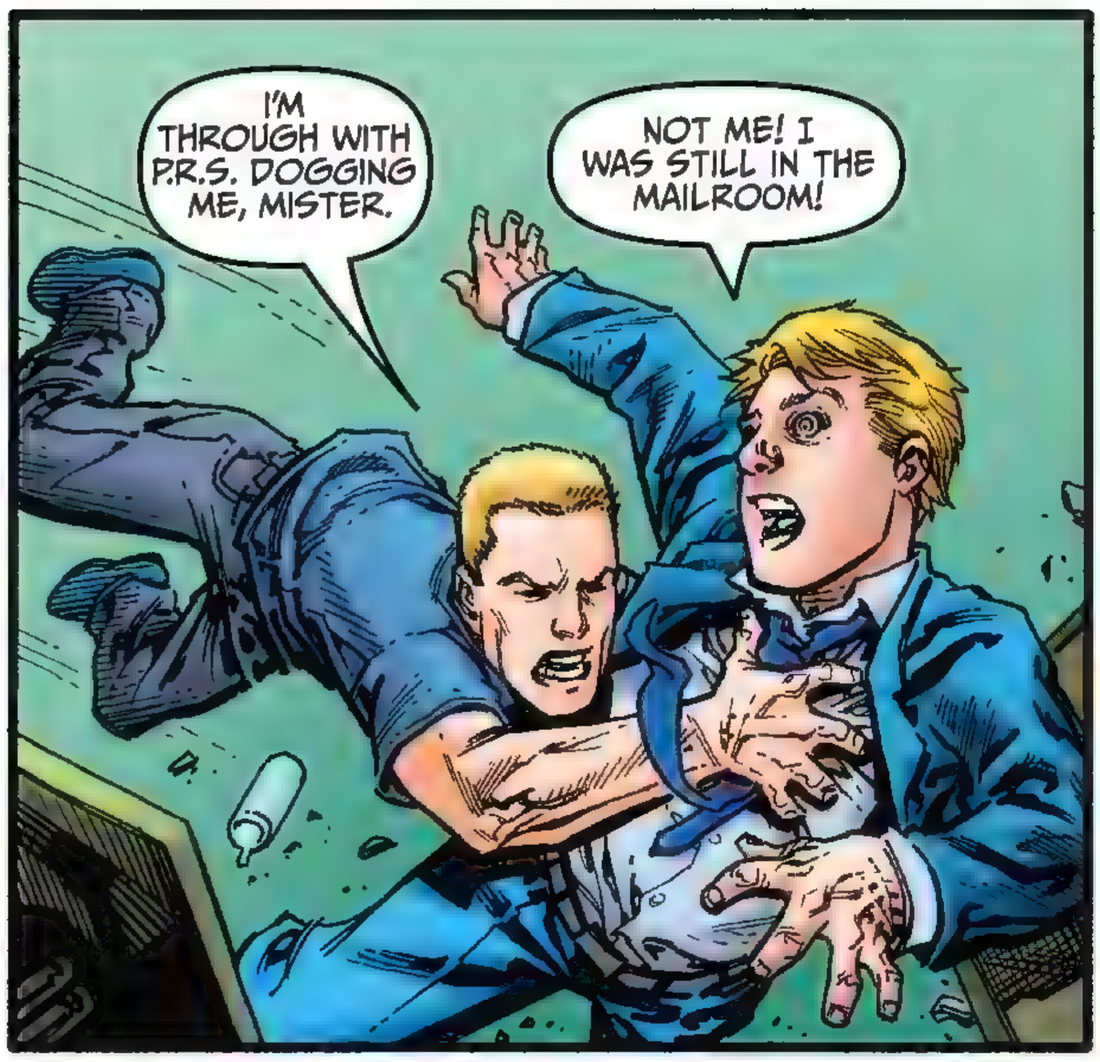
AND IF YOU DON'T, I WILL.
OH, VERY WELL. THIS IS KOZOL.
VENT THE SECTOR. OPEN THE DOORS.
SASS

HE TWITCHES, I FIRE. NO SURPRISES THIS TIME.
I SHOULD HOPE NOT. THE LAST THING WE NEED IS TO BE LURED INTO ANOTHER--

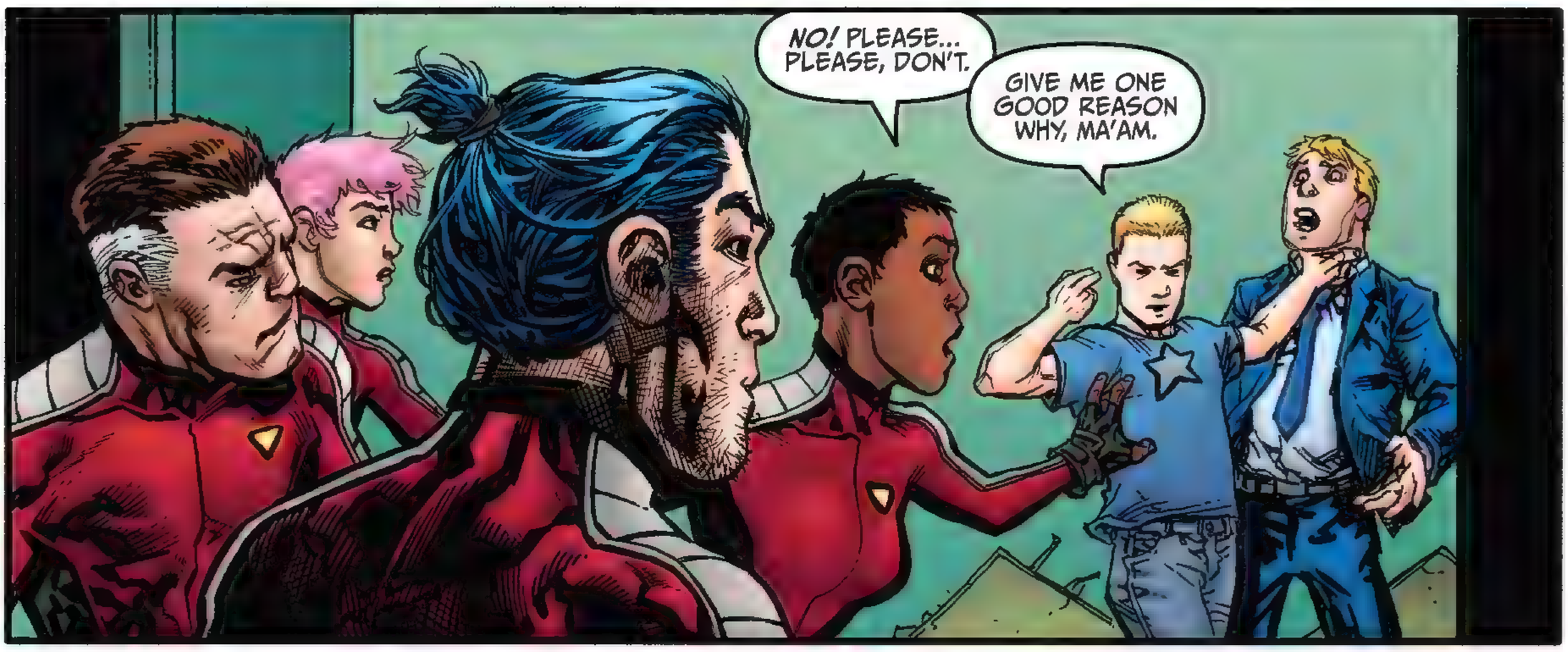

--TRAP.
Diving • Reflex: A mammalian physical response to submersion in cold water, allowing extended survival without oxygen.

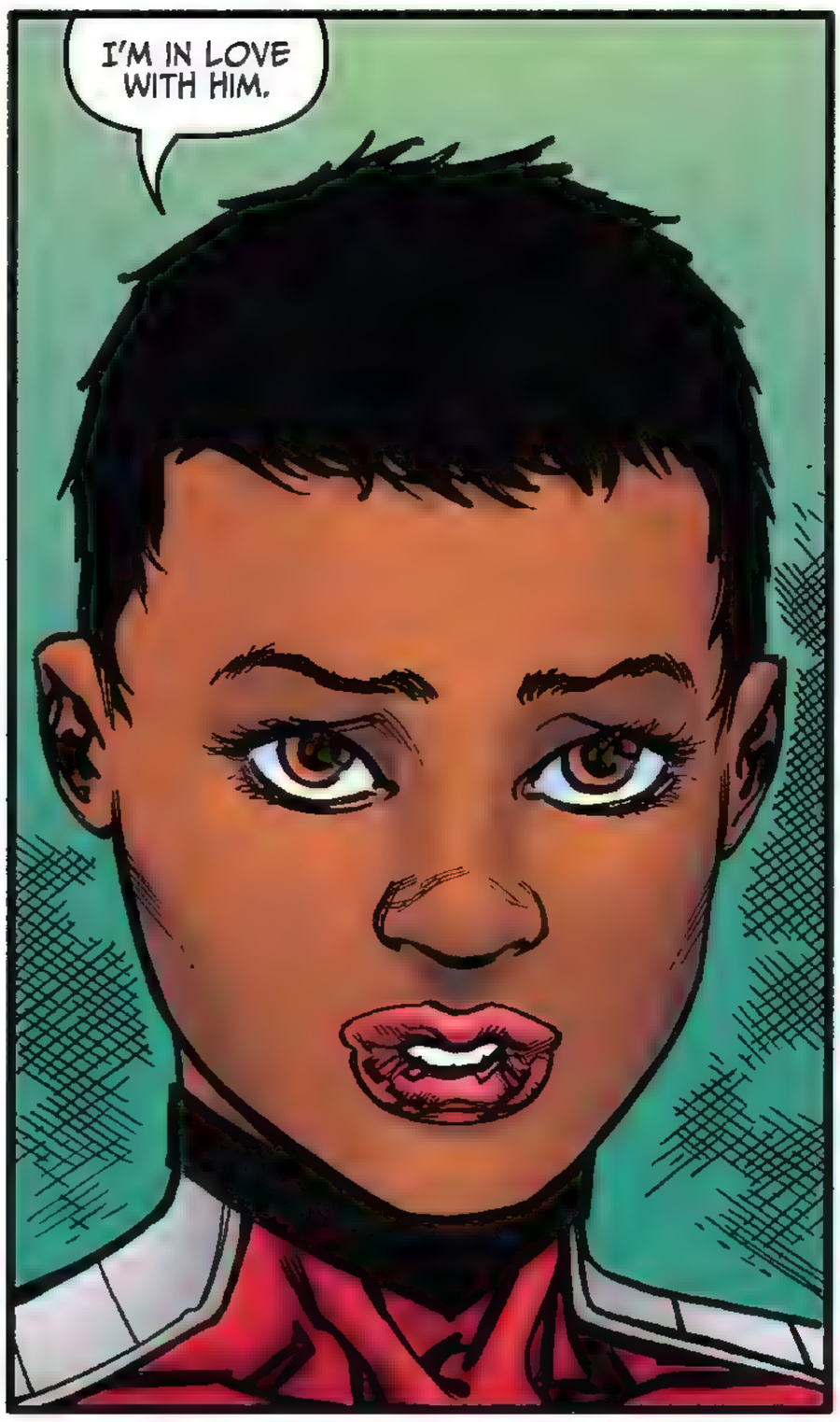
I KNEW IT.
GFF!
CLEAR!
BRATAT
BRATAT
OPEN FIRE! NO POWERS, HE'LL JUST--
shield is H.A.R.D. Corps nomenclature for a protective envelope of telekinetic force wrapping around the psiot
PING
--MIMIC THEM. LIKE THAT.
PING
PING
I'VE GOT A PULSE. WE NEED TO GET HIM TO AN O.R.!
UH, THAT MIGHT BE TRICKY...
stun ram is H.A.R.D. Corps nomenclature for a burst of telekinetic power
GO AHEAD, I WON'T STOP YOU. I'M NOT A MURDERER.
WITH ONE EXCEPTION.
THIS IS WHAT I GET FOR CARING!

P.R.S. EMPLOYEE CAFETERIA.
SCREW IT. VAGABOND TO LIFELINE: GIVE ME MUSCLE MODE.
HE CAN'T COPY IT IF I KNOCK HIM OUT WITH ONE PUNCH!
WHRAK
HNGH!
IF.
systema is a Russian martial art that teaches techniques for taking blows so as to minimize damage
muscle mode is H.A.R.D. Corps nomenclature for psionically augmented strength
URK!
BKOOM


I'M THROUGH WITH P.R.S. DOGGING ME, MISTER.
NOT ME! I WAS STILL IN THE MAILROOM!

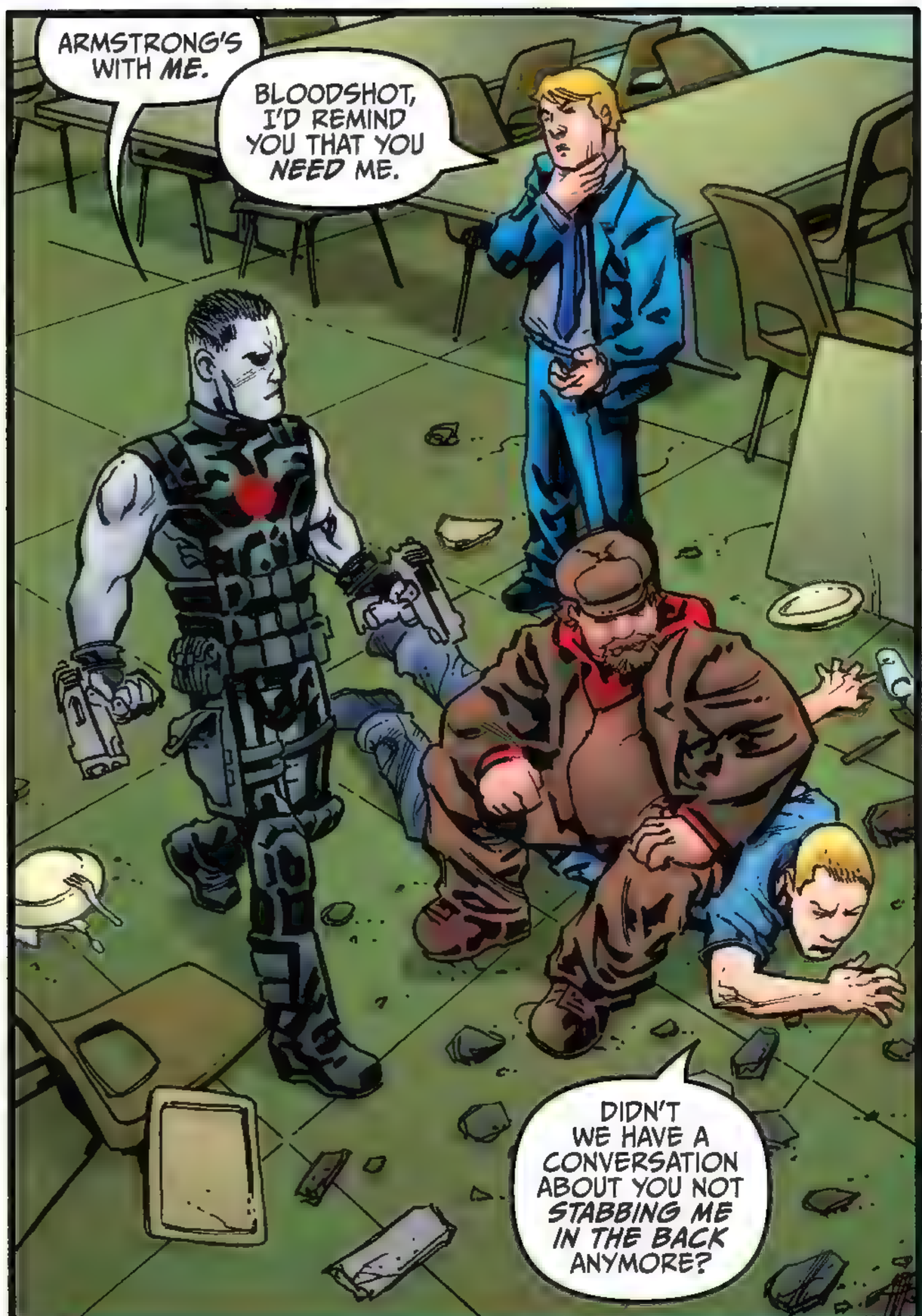
YOU RUN THIS PLACE NOW. YOU *CHOSE* TO COME AFTER ME. IT'S BECOME CLEAR... THE ONLY WAY I'LL EVER KNOW PEACE IS TO KILL YOU.
AND BREAK *PROJECT RISING* SPIRIT INTO TINY LITTLE BITS.


NO! PLEASE... PLEASE, DON'T.
GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON WHY, MA'AM.


I'M IN LOVE WITH HIM.

What?

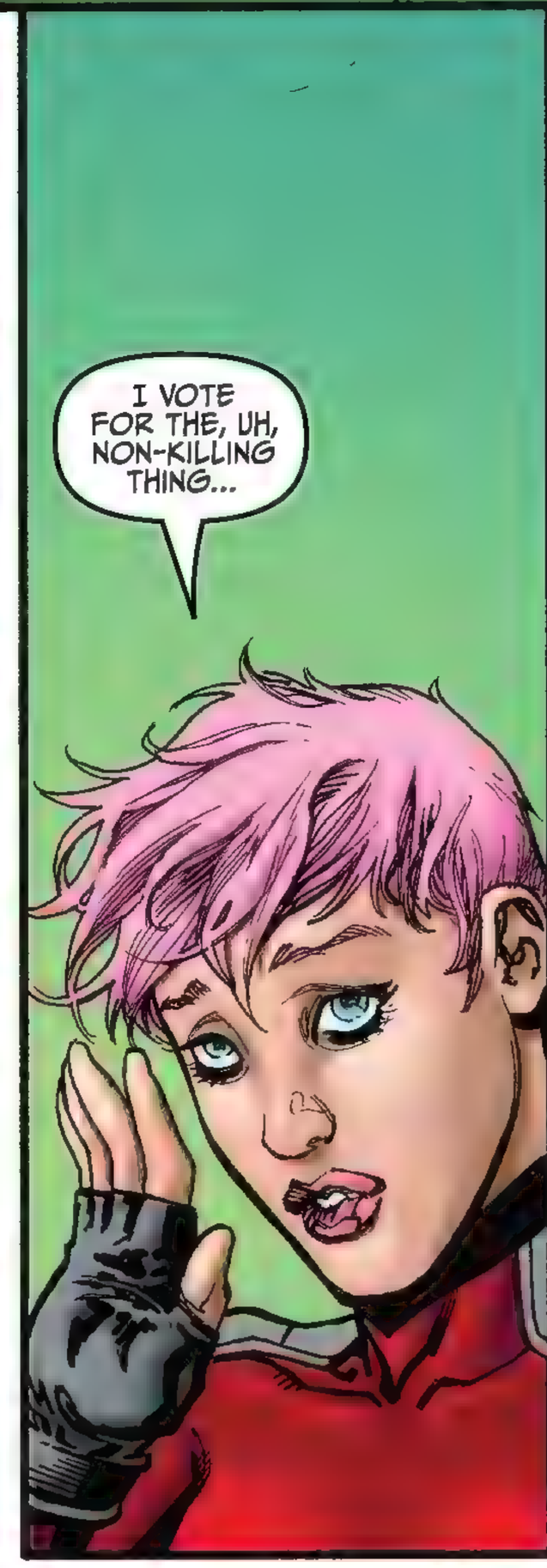
WHY DO GIRLS ALWAYS GO FOR JERKS?
I'M SORRY, MA'AM. BUT I'M AFRAID THAT DOESN'T CARRY SUFFICIENT WEIGHT.
COMING THROUGH!
BRMM
OPEN FI--
NO.
STAND DOWN. ALL OF YOU.


ARMSTRONG'S WITH ME.
BLOODSHOT, I'D REMIND YOU THAT YOU NEED ME.
DIDN'T WE HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT YOU NOT STABBING ME IN THE BACK ANYMORE?

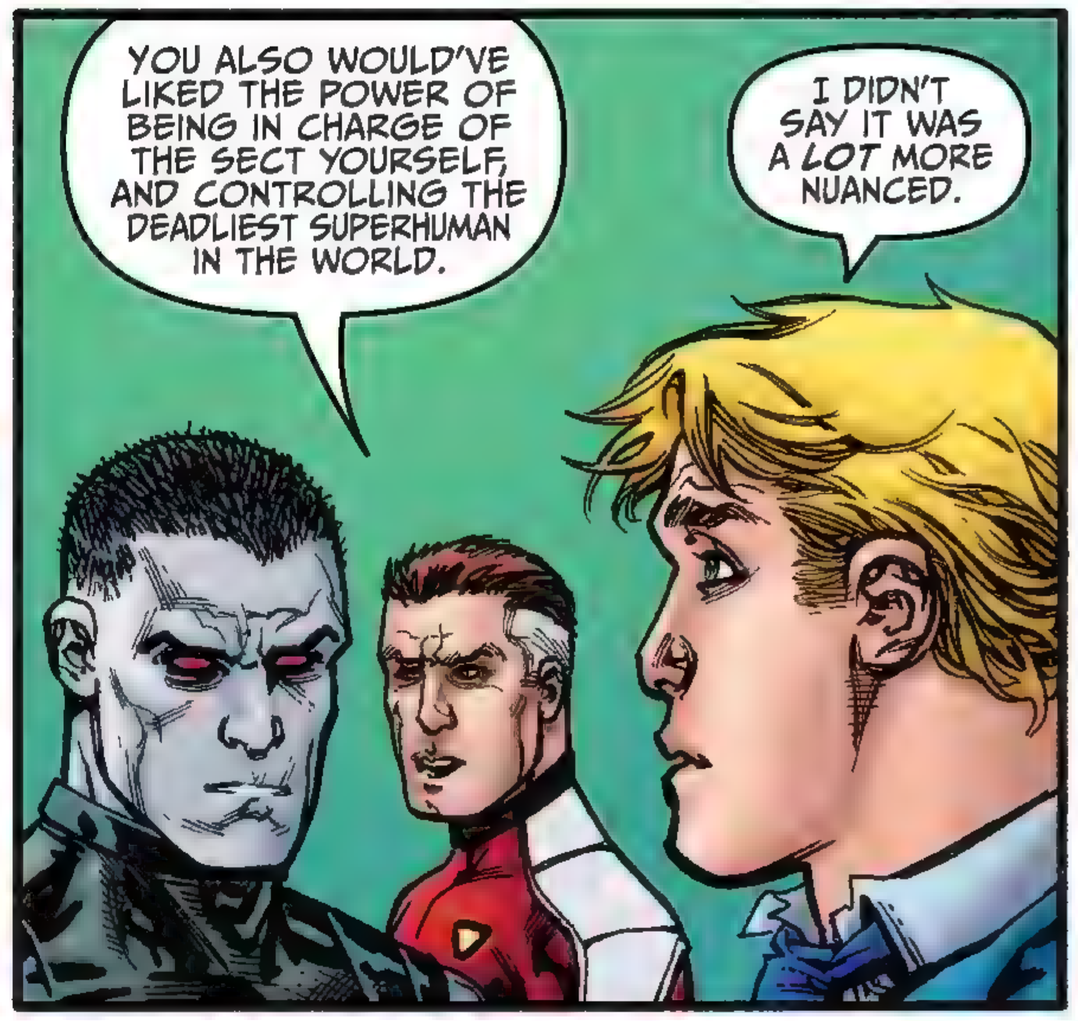
TAKE IT EASY. THIS IS ME LEARNING FROM YOU. LOVE THY ENEMY AND TURN THE OTHER CHEEK.
WONDERFUL. I HAVE A CRISIS OF FAITH, SO OF COURSE YOU FIND RELIGION.
AND I WOULD PREFER YOU TURN YOUR CHEEKS ELSEWHERE.

WHAT ARMSTRONG'S TRYING TO SAY IS, WE'VE FIXED EVERYTHING.
NOW LISTEN TO OUR PEACE PLAN.

OR I'LL KILL EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM.
CH-CHK


I VOTE FOR THE, UH, NON-KILLING THING...

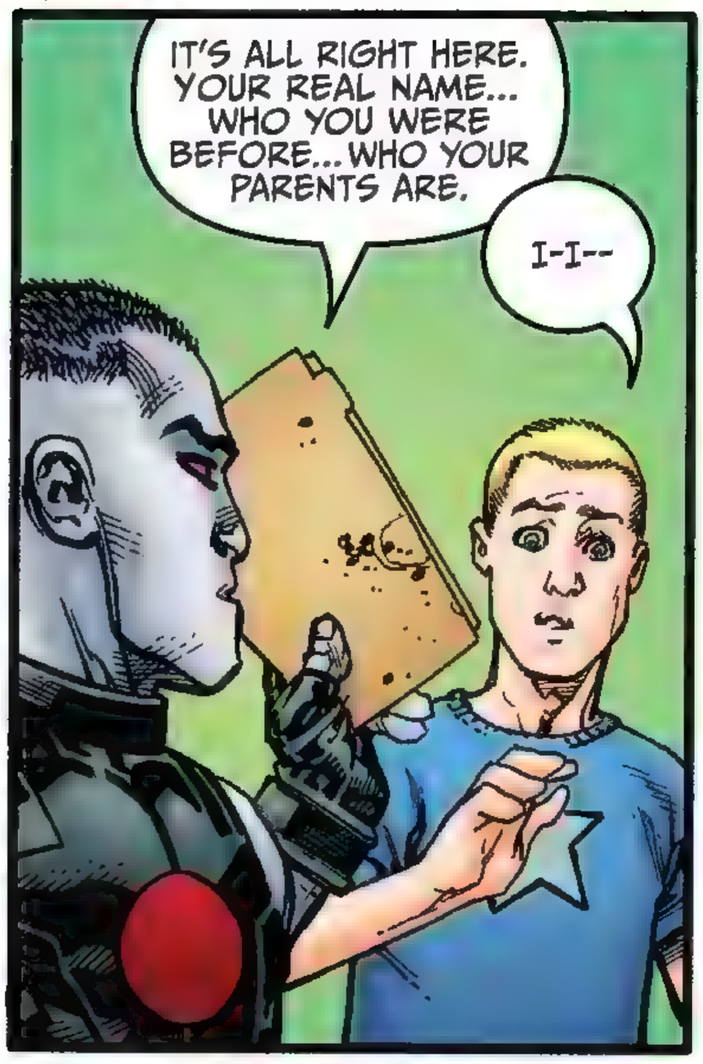
KOZOL. YOU SAID AT THE START THAT YOUR MAIN GOAL WAS GETTING P.R.S. FREE OF THE HASSLES OF BEING PART OF THE SECT.
IT'S MORE NUANCED THAN THAT.

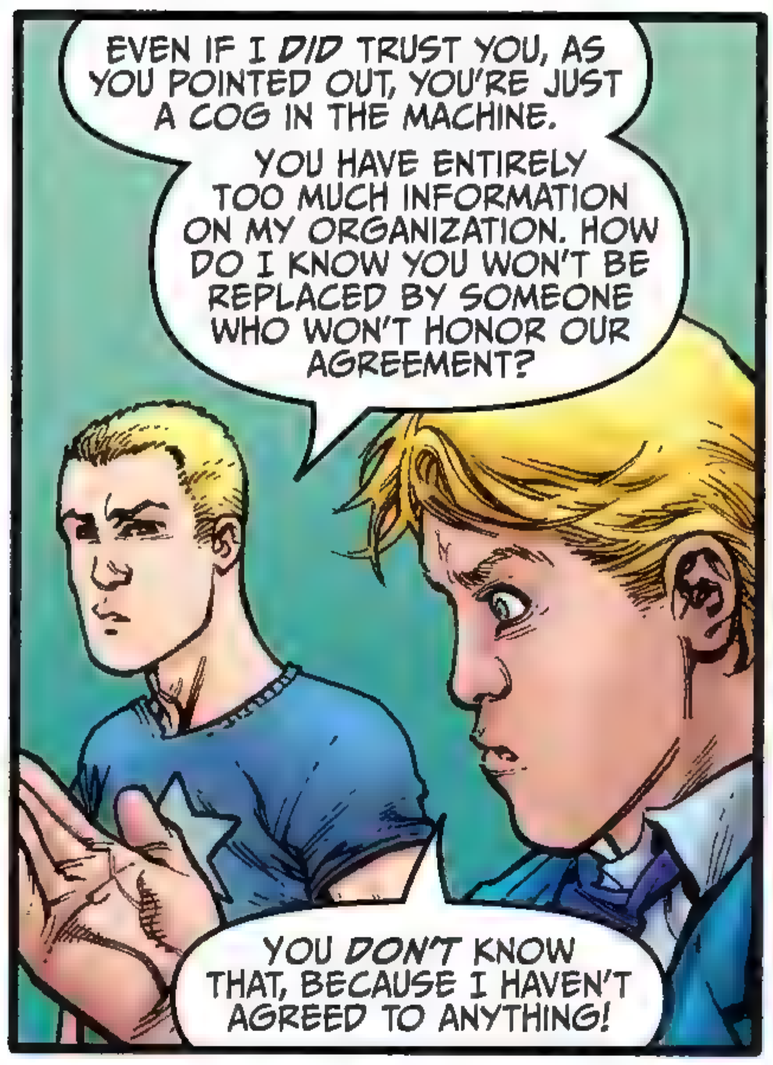

YOU ALSO WOULD'VE LIKED THE POWER OF BEING IN CHARGE OF THE SECT YOURSELF, AND CONTROLLING THE DEADLIEST SUPERHUMAN IN THE WORLD.
I DIDN'T SAY IT WAS A LOT MORE NUANCED.

WELL, THAT PART'S OFF THE TABLE. BUT MY LITTLE BUDDY HERE HAS A PROPOSITION.
HE'LL RELEASE YOU AND YOUR COMPANY FROM ALL SECT OBLIGATIONS, IN WRITING...
I WILL?

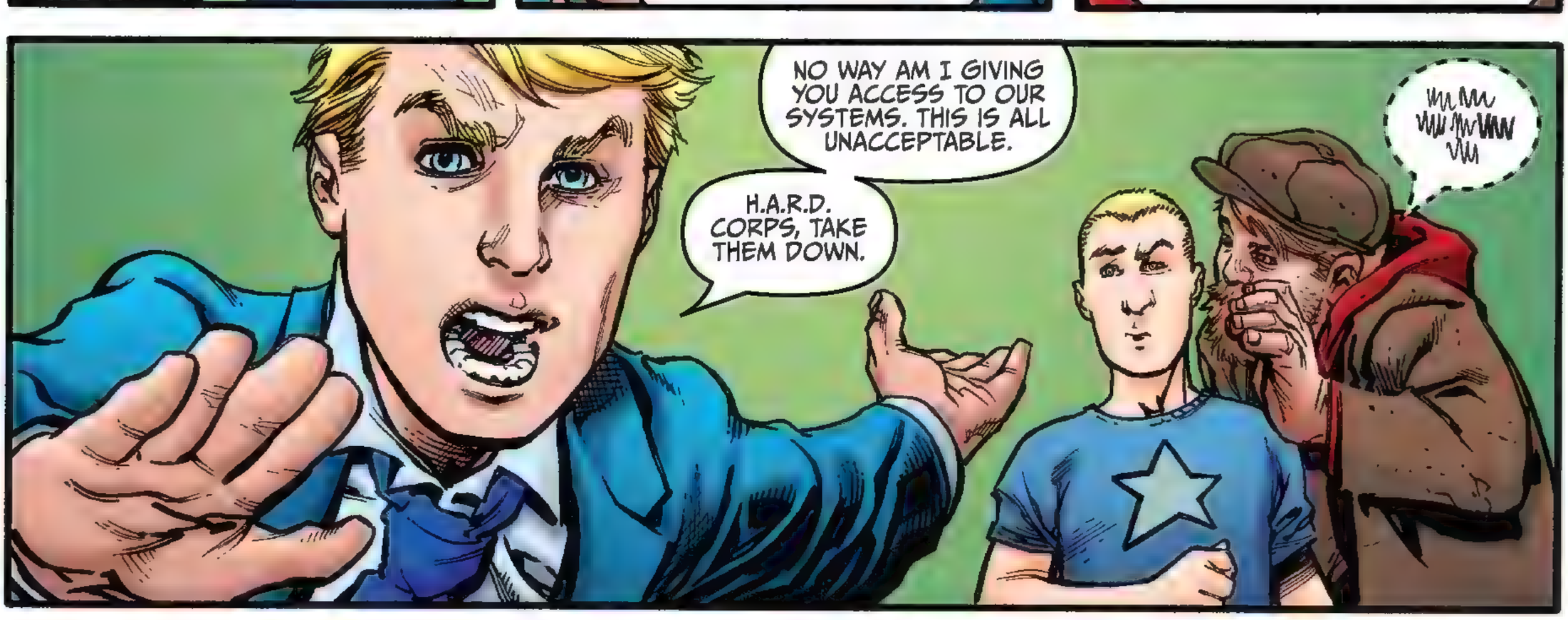
IN EXCHANGE FOR A PROMISE NOT TO INTERFERE WITH THE NEW DOMINION'S ACTIVITIES...AND ALL P.R.S. FILES ON ARCHER.
NOW HOLD ON. YOU DON'T HAVE THE GOODS TO BACK UP THAT OFFER.
ACTUALLY...

"...I DO."


IT'S ALL RIGHT HERE. YOUR REAL NAME... WHO YOU WERE BEFORE...WHO YOUR PARENTS ARE.
I-I--

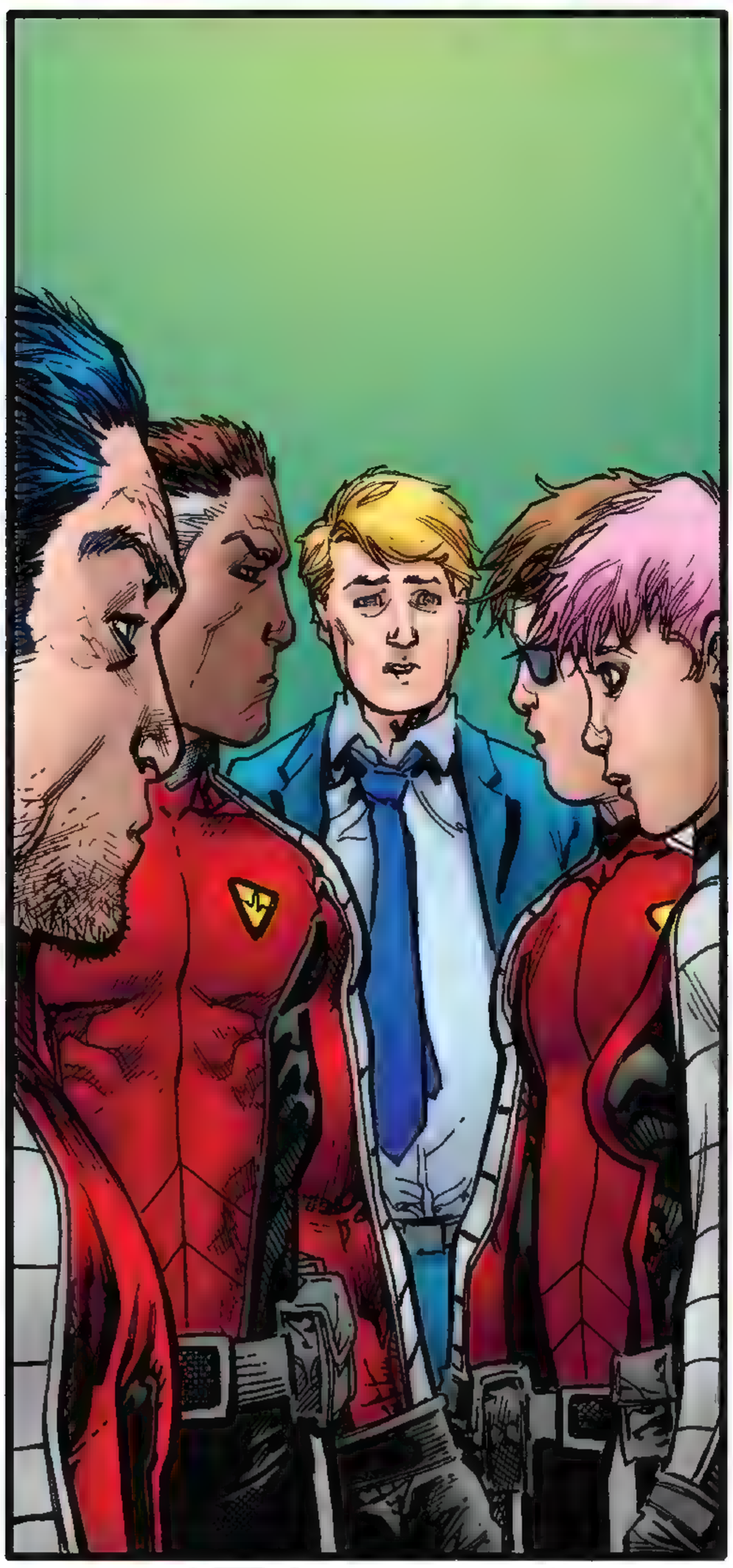

EVEN IF I *DID* TRUST YOU, AS YOU POINTED OUT, YOU'RE JUST A COG IN THE MACHINE.
YOU HAVE ENTIRELY TOO MUCH INFORMATION ON MY ORGANIZATION. HOW DO I KNOW YOU WON'T BE REPLACED BY SOMEONE WHO WON'T HONOR OUR AGREEMENT?
YOU *DON'T* KNOW THAT, BECAUSE I HAVEN'T AGREED TO ANYTHING!

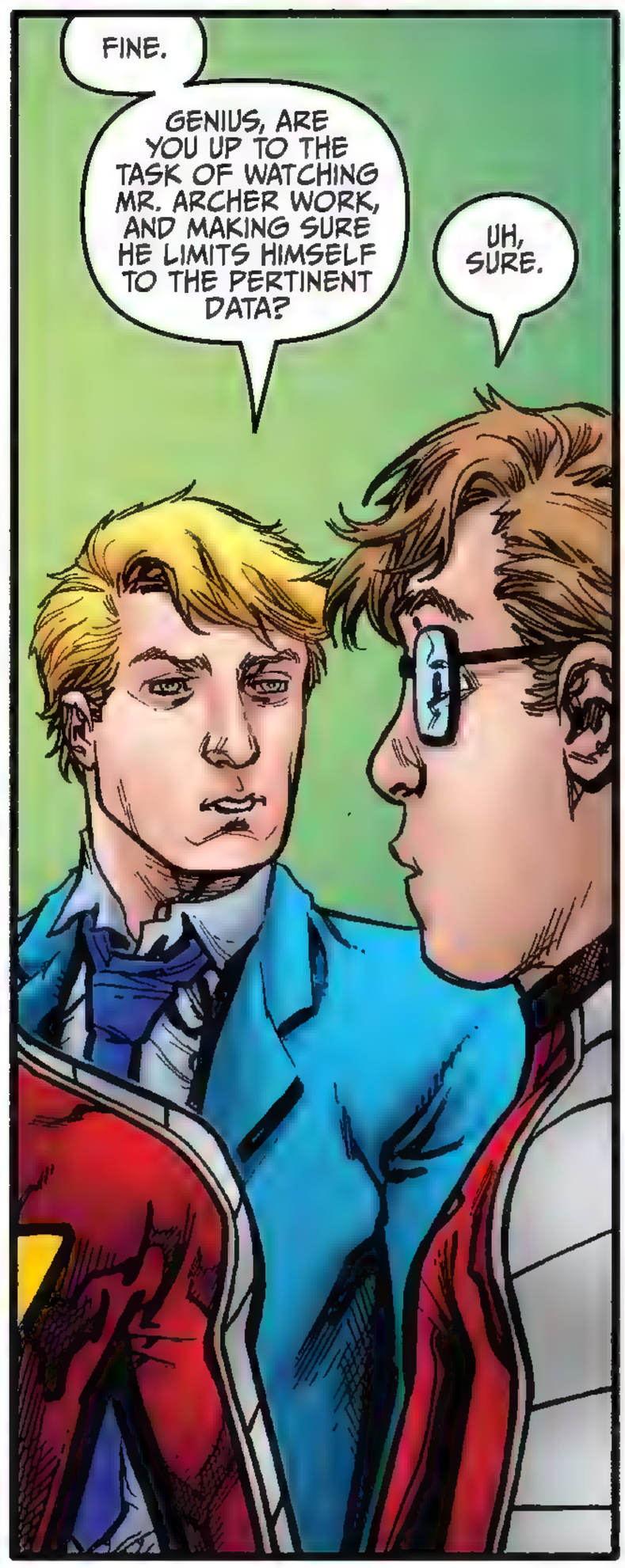
I WAS GETTING THERE. BEFORE WE LEAVE, MY PAL GETS TO WIPE P.R.S. FILES OF ANYTHING YOU HAVE ON HIM OR THE NEW DOMINION. HE DOES IT. HIMSELF.
YOU CAN WATCH TO MAKE SURE IT'S ALL KOSHER.
OR HAVE SOME OF YOUR GUYS SUPERVISE. MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T ERASE YOUR FURRY PORN OR WHATEVER.

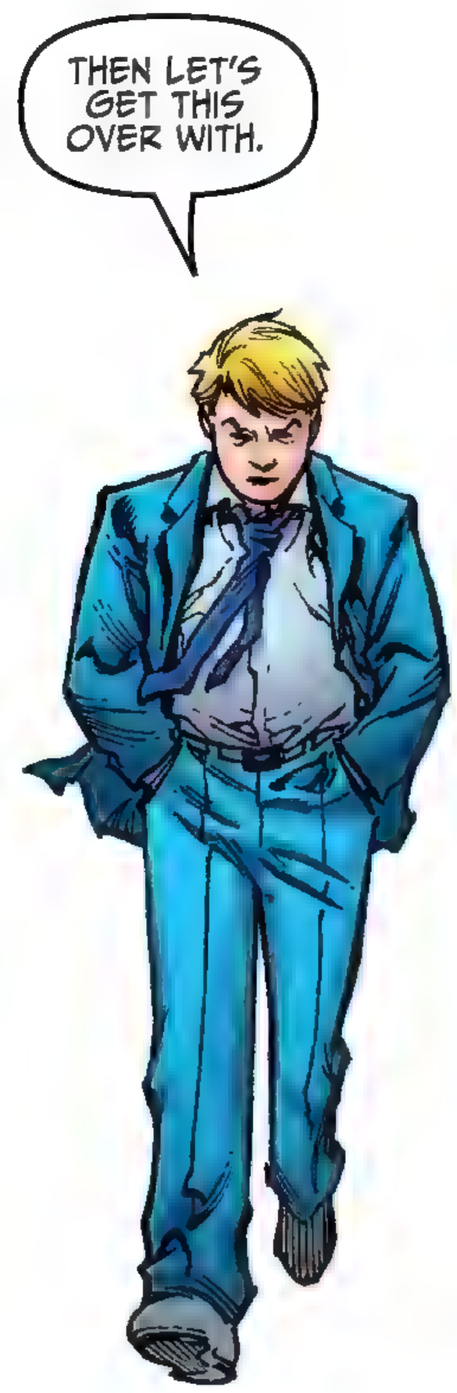

NO WAY AM I GIVING YOU ACCESS TO OUR SYSTEMS. THIS IS ALL UNACCEPTABLE.
H.A.R.D. CORPS, TAKE THEM DOWN.
MMM

YEAH.
I DON'T THINK SO.

YOU SHOULD TAKE THE OFFER, MR. KOZOL.




FINE.
GENIUS, ARE YOU UP TO THE TASK OF WATCHING MR. ARCHER WORK, AND MAKING SURE HE LIMITS HIMSELF TO THE PERTINENT DATA?
UH, SURE.


THEN LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.

PROJECT RISING SPIRIT
HOW'S IT COMING?
FINE. THERE'S A LOT TO ERASE. RISING SPIRIT'S AWFULLY NOSY.
OH, MAN! THAT IS RANK!
DUDE!
BRR AAPPP
GIMME A BREAK, I CAN'T HELP IT!
IT'S A NATURAL BODILY FUNCTION! DON'T BE SO REPRESSED!
computer hacking involves seeking and exploiting weaknesses in a computer system or network

LATER.
OKAY, WE'RE DONE.
FINE. MY LAWYERS HAVE PREPARED THE PAPERS FOR US TO SIGN.

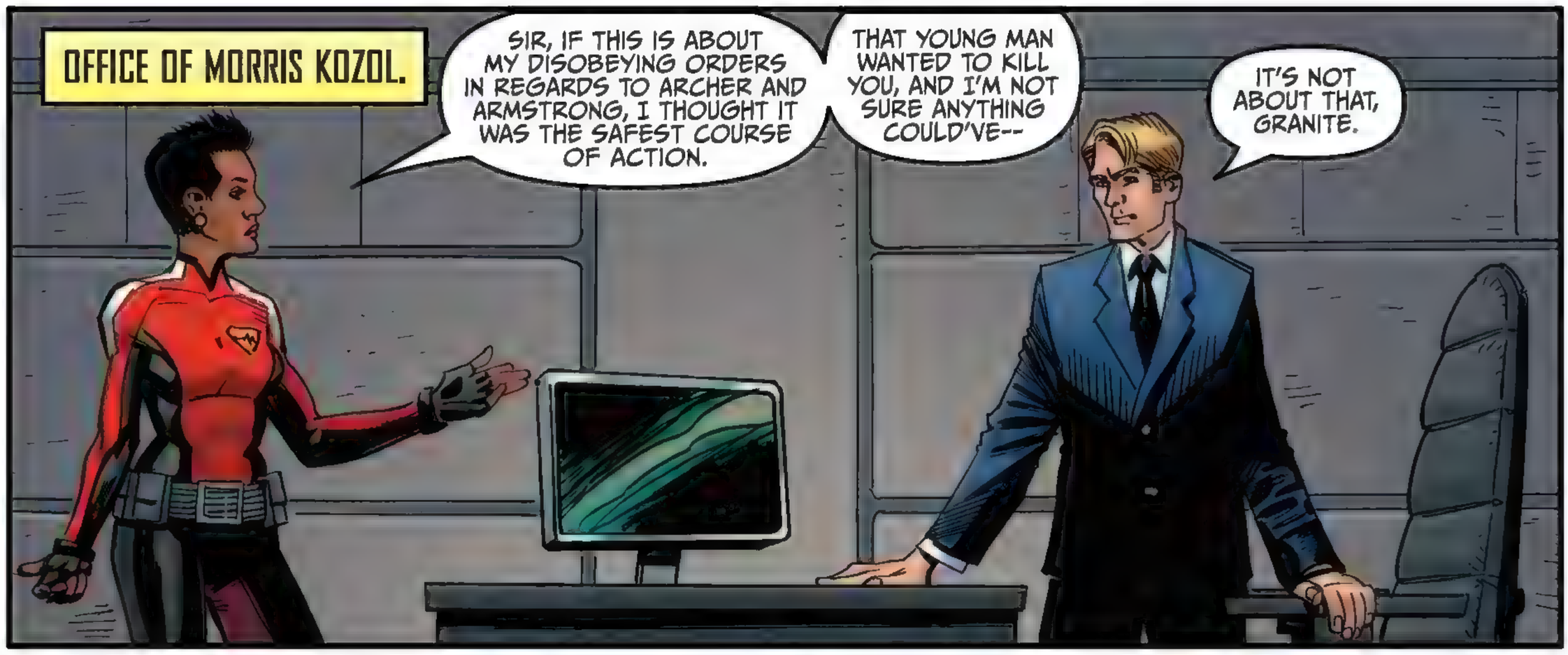
ALL SET?
YEAH. MY BUDDY DEACTIVATED THE BOMBS IN THOSE "GENERATION ZERO" KIDS' HEADS.
THEY CAN'T BE TURNED BACK ON REMOTELY. BUT LISTEN...

...IT LOOKS LIKE RISING SPIRIT KINDA HAS A HEAD-BOMB FETISH. THEY GOT EXPLOSIVES IN *THOUSANDS* OF PEOPLE'S SKULLS, GOING BACK DECADES. TOO MANY TO COUNT.
THEY COULD BLOW THE HEADS OFF EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM.

THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WERE SIGNING UP FOR. THEY MADE A CHOICE.
AND I DIDN'T MAKE ANY PROMISES TO THEM.

NOT ME. THE NANITES IN MY BLOOD CONSUME ANY FOREIGN OBJECTS IN MY BODY.
AS FOR H.A.R.D. CORPS...

YOU SURE THAT WOMAN'S YOUR ONLY MOLE IN THIS PLACE?
THE ONLY ONE I'M AWARE OF. I CAN'T SPEAK FOR OTHER SECT FACTIONS.
HOW'S THE FELLOW I OPERATED ON... DISCIPLE?
STABLE. YOU PROBABLY SAVED HIS LIFE. AFTER ALMOST TAKING IT, SO DON'T EXPECT FLOWERS.
TELL HIM I WISH HIM THE BEST. I ENVY HIM HIS FAITH. THE MORE I SEE OF THE WORLD... AND PEOPLE LIKE YOU...
...THE LESS I'M ABLE TO SHARE IT.
HEY, MAN... SORRY ABOUT THE ROOFIES. AND HITTING YOU WITH THE KEG. YOU SEEM LIKE A DECENT GUY.
NO WORRIES. BUSINESS IS BUSINESS.
BUT LISTEN, VAGABOND, THERE'S SOMETHING I WANNA SAY TO YOU... AND I DON'T SAY IT OFTEN.
YOU MIGHT WANNA TAKE IT EASY ON THE SAUCE.
DUDE! YOU DRANK, LIKE, TWENTY TIMES WHAT I DID!
I'M IMMORTAL.
YOU POOR BASTARD.
HEY, KID, LET'S GET OUTTA HERE.
THESE PEOPLE ARE MESSED UP.

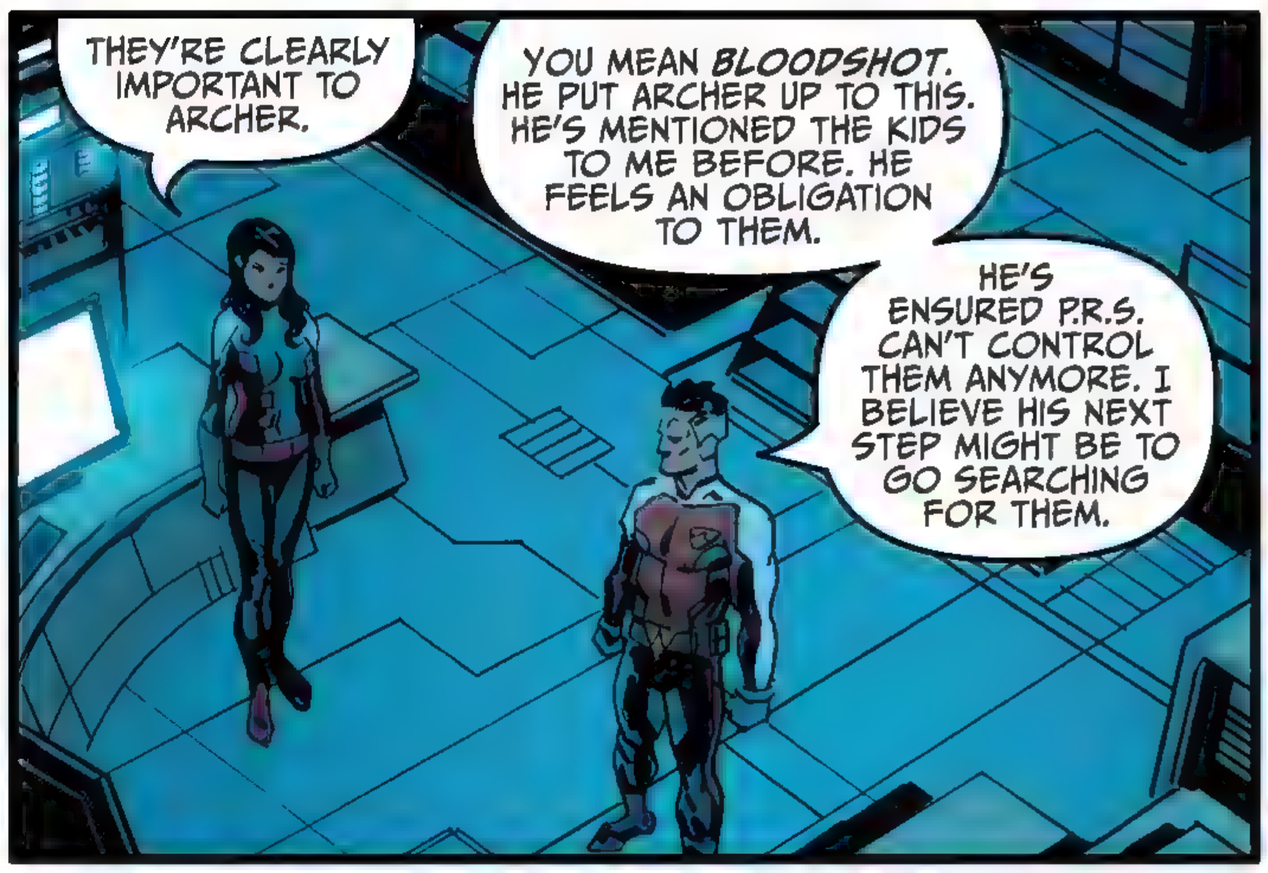

OFFICE OF MORRIS KOZOL.
SIR, IF THIS IS ABOUT MY DISOBEYING ORDERS IN REGARDS TO ARCHER AND ARMSTRONG, I THOUGHT IT WAS THE SAFEST COURSE OF ACTION.
THAT YOUNG MAN WANTED TO KILL YOU, AND I'M NOT SURE ANYTHING COULD'VE--
IT'S NOT ABOUT THAT, GRANITE.

I HAD DESIGNS ON RE-ACQUIRING ARCHER AS AN ASSET, YES. BUT I CAN SEE NOW THAT'S NOT AN OPTION. HE'S DAMAGED GOODS.
SHORT OF A HOSTILE TAKE-OVER OF THE SECT, EXTRACTING P.R.S. FROM THEIR NONSENSE IS THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOME. NO, THIS IS ABOUT... THE *OTHER* THING. WHAT YOU *SAID*.

ARE YOU *BLUSHING?*
GRANITE, YOU REALIZE I PUT IMPLANTS IN YOUR HEAD THAT WILL *KILL YOU HORRIBLY.*
AND THAT I USE YOU AS A LIVING WEAPON TO ENRICH MYSELF, P.R.S., AND OUR CLIENTS.

SURE. I ALSO KNOW YOU'VE DONE MORE TO HELP ME AND MY FAMILY THAN ANYONE, EVER.
BECAUSE I STAND TO *BENEFIT*. IF YOU DO, AS WELL, IT'S JUST A HAPPY ACCIDENT.
OKAY. SO WE'VE BOTH MADE OUR BIG CONFESSIONS.

LET'S MOVE ON TO SOME-THING WORTH CONFESSING.

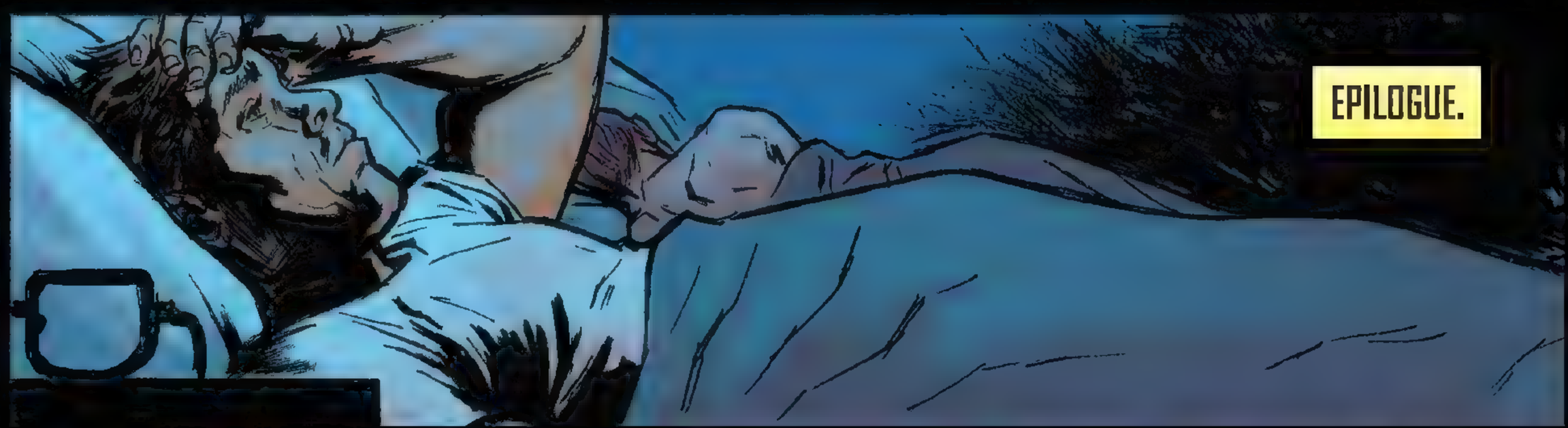


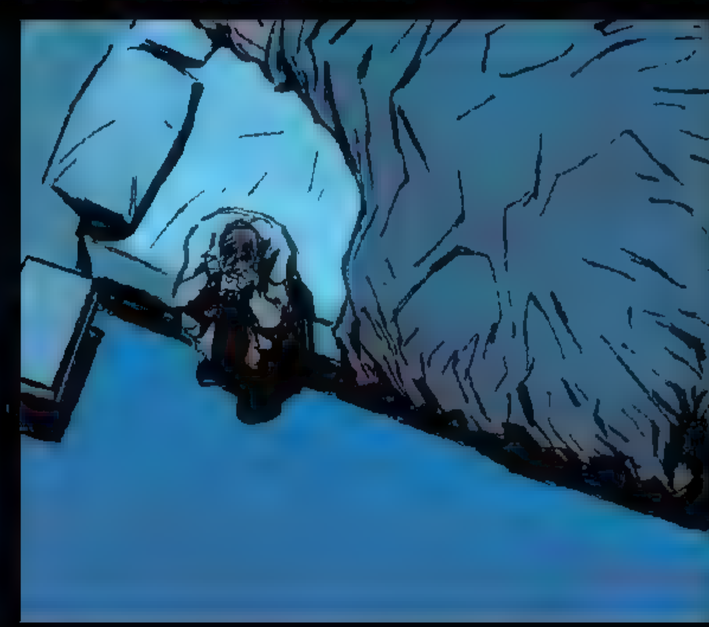
"RIGHT NOW, BLOODSHOT NEEDS P.R.S. TO GIVE HIS NANITES REGULAR AMINO ACID BATHS, OR THEY'LL MALFUNCTION AND CONSUME HIM.

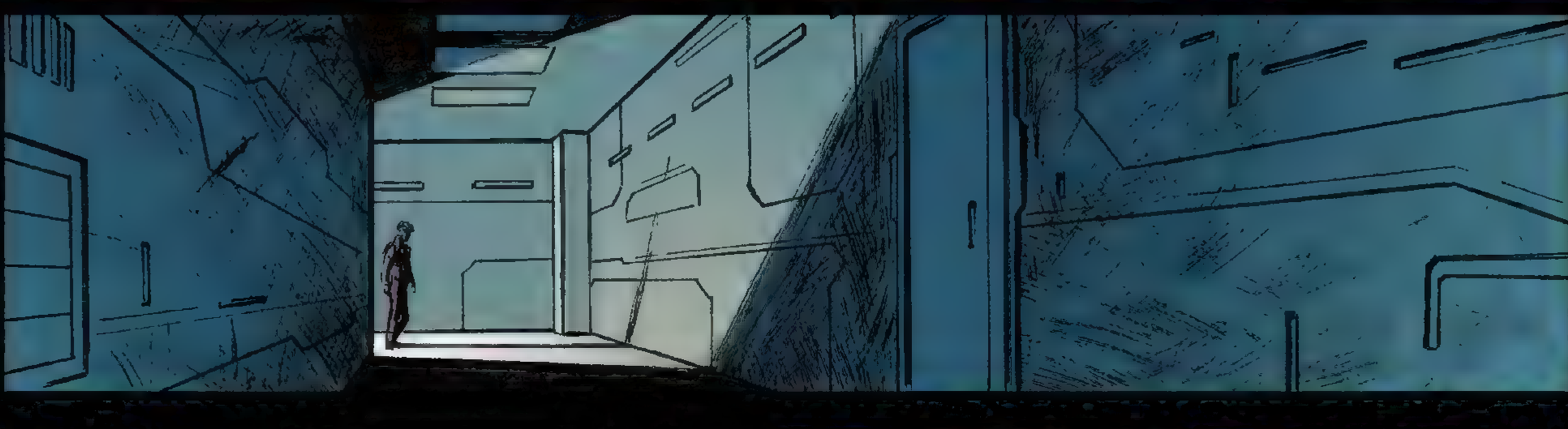
"AS LONG AS THAT'S THE CASE, HE WON'T MAKE A MOVE. BUT IF WE EVER SEE THE DAY WHEN THERE ISN'T A REASON TO STOP HIM...

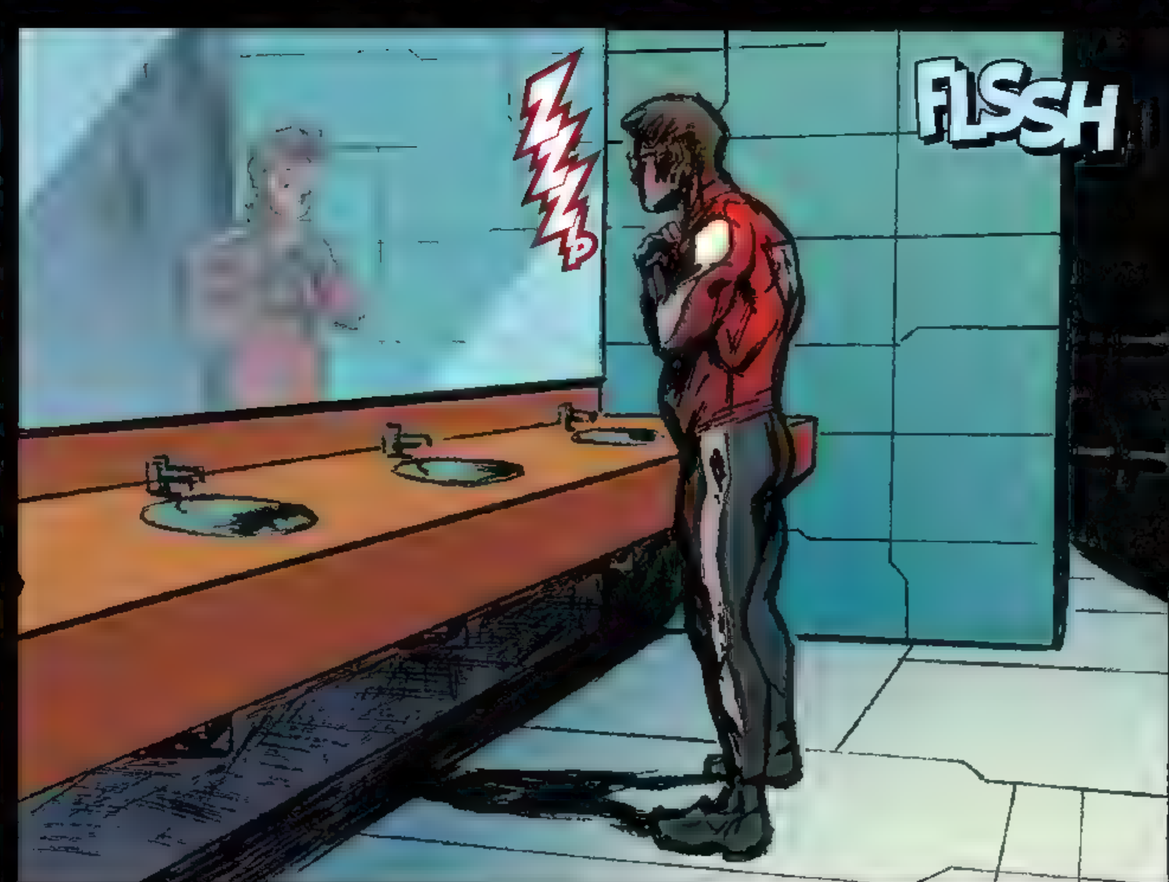
"...I HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.

"AND WE NEED TO BE READY."

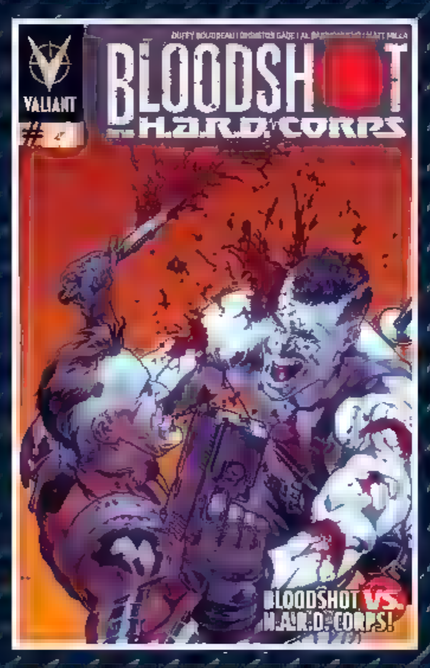

EPILOGUE.



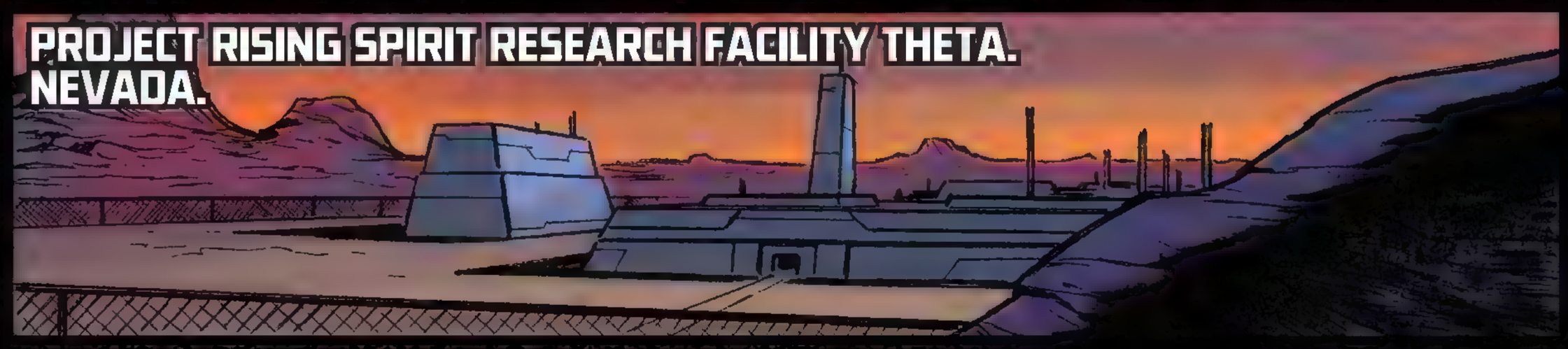


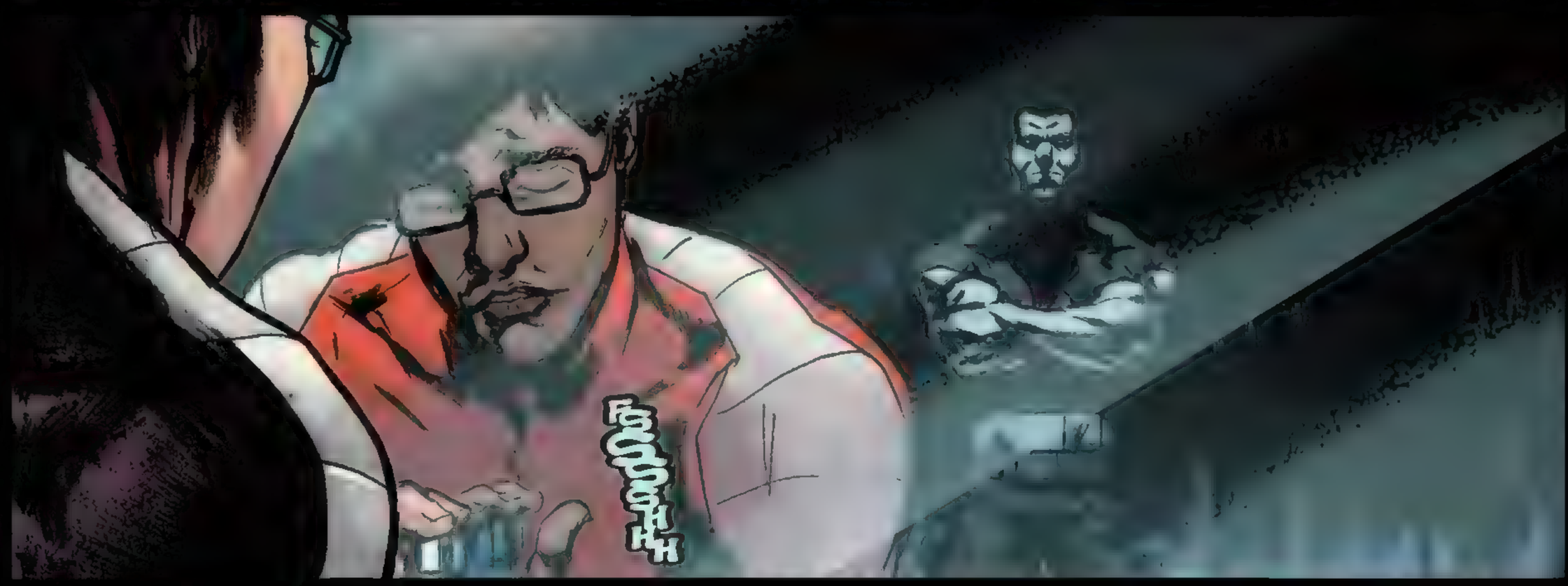

FLSSH

BLOODSHOT VS. H.A.R.D. CORPS



VALIANT
#22
DUFFY BOUDREAU | CHRISTOS GAGE | AL BARRIONUEVO | MATT MILLA
BLOODSHOT
AND H.A.R.D. CORPS
BLOODSHOT VS. H.A.R.D. CORPS!
LaRosa


PROJECT RISING SPIRIT RESEARCH FACILITY THETA.
NEVADA.


FRUSSSHH

GENIUS.
BWAH!

HOLY JESUS!
FRUSSSHH
BLOOD-- BLOODSHOT... YOU CAN'T BE DOING THAT!
I THOUGHT WE SHOULD TALK.

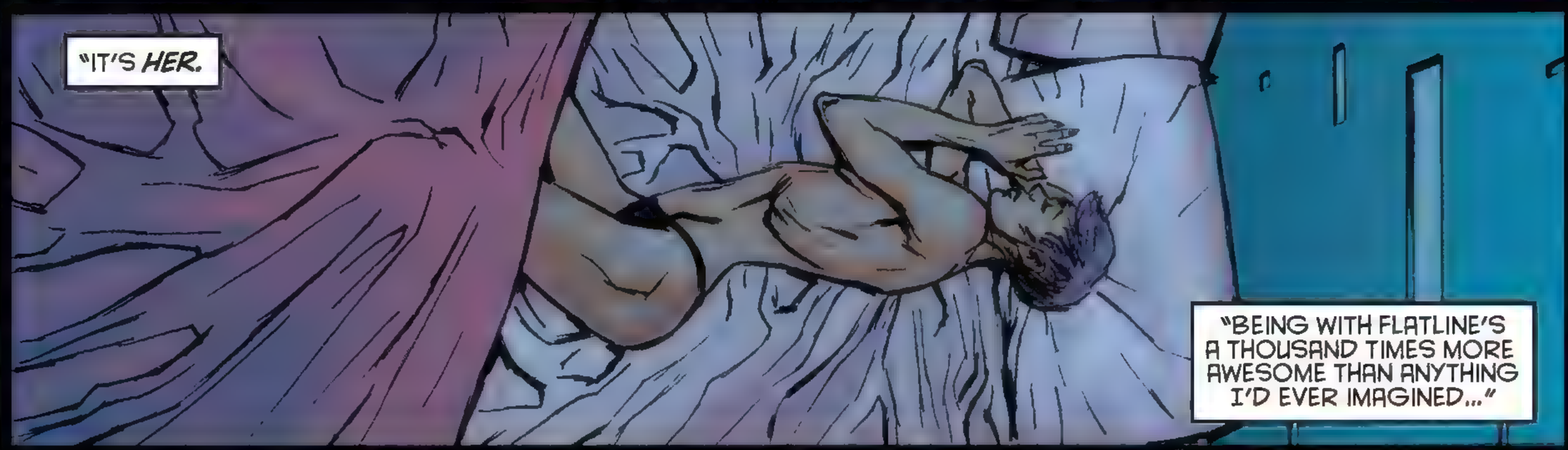
UH... NOW?
GOOD A TIME AS ANY.
...UM... OKAY...
FAUCET NEEDS TO BE SHUT OFF.
YOU SHOULD PROBABLY TAKE CARE OF THAT FIRST, DON'T YOU THINK?
FSSSSSHHH
YEAH... FAUCET... GOOD IDEA...
SO WHAT ALL DID YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?
I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU, GENIUS.
YOU DON'T HAVE YOUR HEAD RIGHT.
YEAH...NO... I MEAN...
...YOU ALREADY KNOW, DON'T YOU?
I THINK I MIGHT HAVE SOME IDEA.

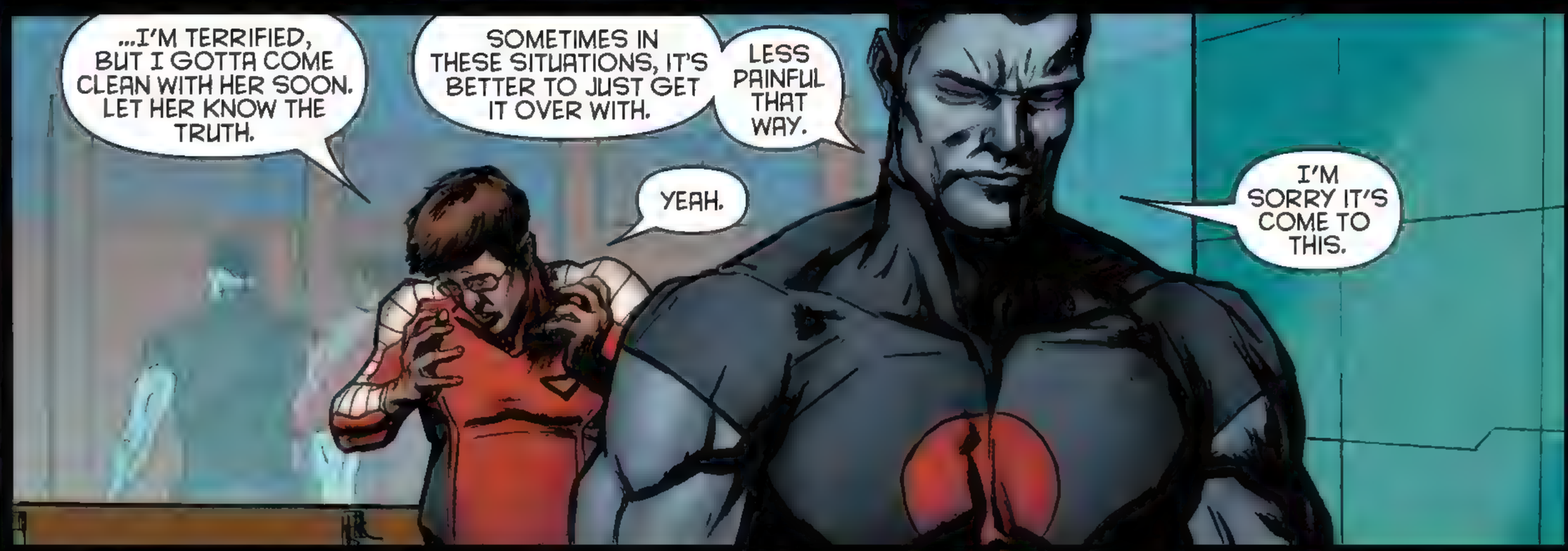
I'M LOSING IT, MAN.
ON OUR LAST MISSION, THAT ARCHER GUY...HE ZAPPED ME WITH AN ELECTRICAL BOLT, AND I DUNNO WHAT HAPPENED, BUT HE FRIED MY IMPLANTS OR SOMETHING.
AND NOW, WHATEVER RISING SPIRIT DID TO ME... IT'S BEEN *UNDONE.*

YOUR HEIGHTENED INTELLIGENCE HAS DEGRADED.
YEAH. BACK TO MY OLD DUMB SELF.
EXCEPT BEFORE I DIDN'T EVEN *KNOW* I WAS DUMB, HAD NO IDEA WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE SMART.
AND NOW THAT IT'S SLIPPING AWAY DAY BY DAY, I ALMOST WISH I'D NEVER GOTTEN A TASTE.

YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE UNFIT FOR THE FIELD NOW, RIGHT?

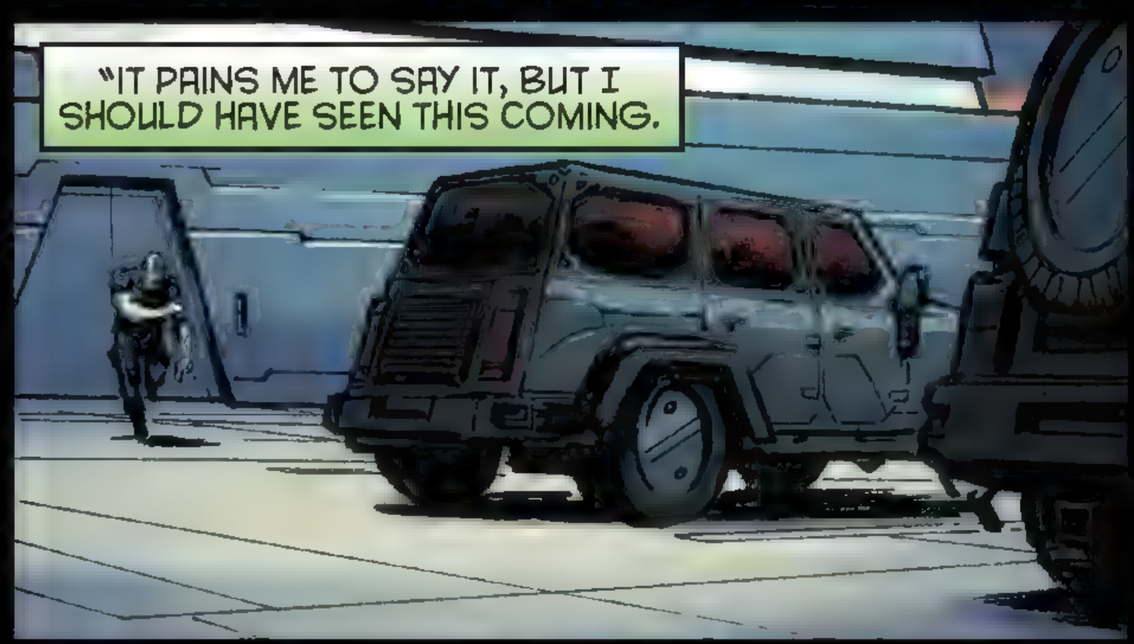
OH, I GOT A COUPLE OF MISSIONS LEFT IN ME STILL.
BUT IT'S NOT THE WORK I'LL MISS...


"IT'S *HER.*
"BEING WITH FLATLINE'S A THOUSAND TIMES MORE AWESOME THAN ANYTHING I'D EVER IMAGINED..."

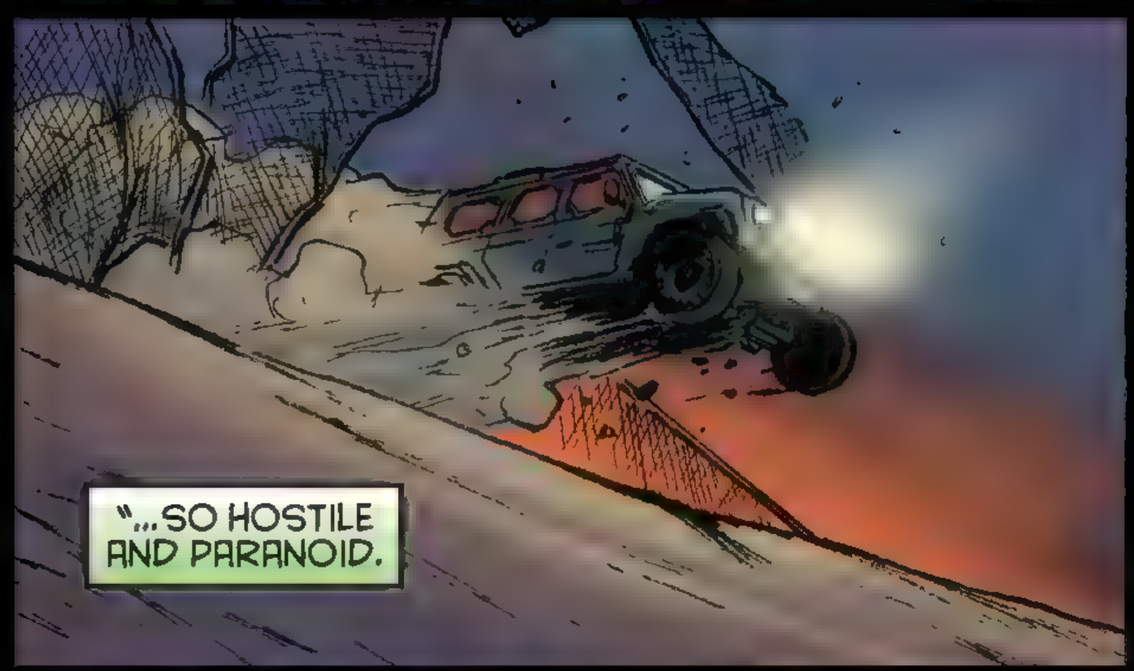

...I'M TERRIFIED, BUT I GOTTA COME CLEAN WITH HER SOON. LET HER KNOW THE TRUTH.
SOMETIMES IN THESE SITUATIONS, IT'S BETTER TO JUST GET IT OVER WITH.
LESS PAINFUL THAT WAY.
YEAH.
I'M SORRY IT'S COME TO THIS.

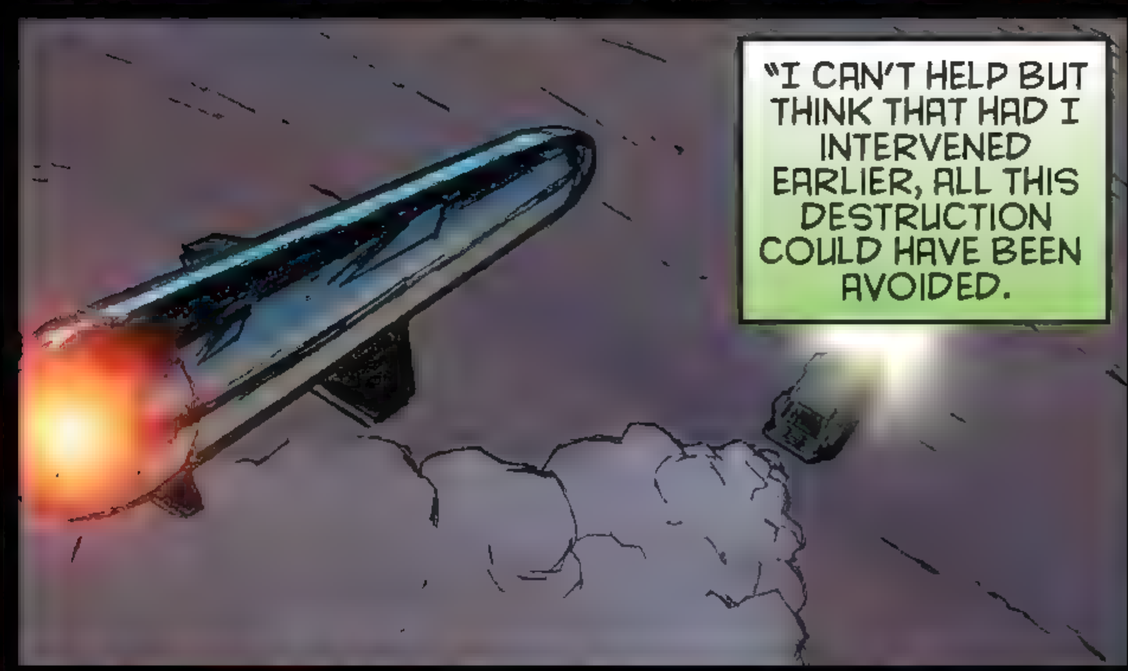
"A NEARBY GUARD THEN RESPONDED TO THE DISTURBANCE, ENTERING THE BATHROOM LESS THAN THIRTY SECONDS AFTER THE INCIDENT.
"HE IMMEDIATELY ATTEMPTED TO ELICIT SOME TYPE OF EXPLANATION.
BUT, AS YOU'VE SEEN FROM THE FOOTAGE..."

"...BLOODSHOT WAS LESS THAN COOPERATIVE.
"AT THAT POINT, I FELT A MORE ROBUST RESPONSE WAS WARRANTED.
"YOU KNOW, JUST TO GET THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. TRY TO SUBDUE HIM.
"UNFORTUNATELY, HE WAS ABLE TO IMPROVISE...
" HE GOT ONE STEP AHEAD OF US...AND IT WAS ALL HE NEEDED."


"IT PAINS ME TO SAY IT, BUT I SHOULD HAVE SEEN THIS COMING.

"HE'D BECOME SO DETACHED FROM THE TEAM...


"...SO HOSTILE AND PARANOID.


"I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT HAD I INTERVENED EARLIER, ALL THIS DESTRUCTION COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED.

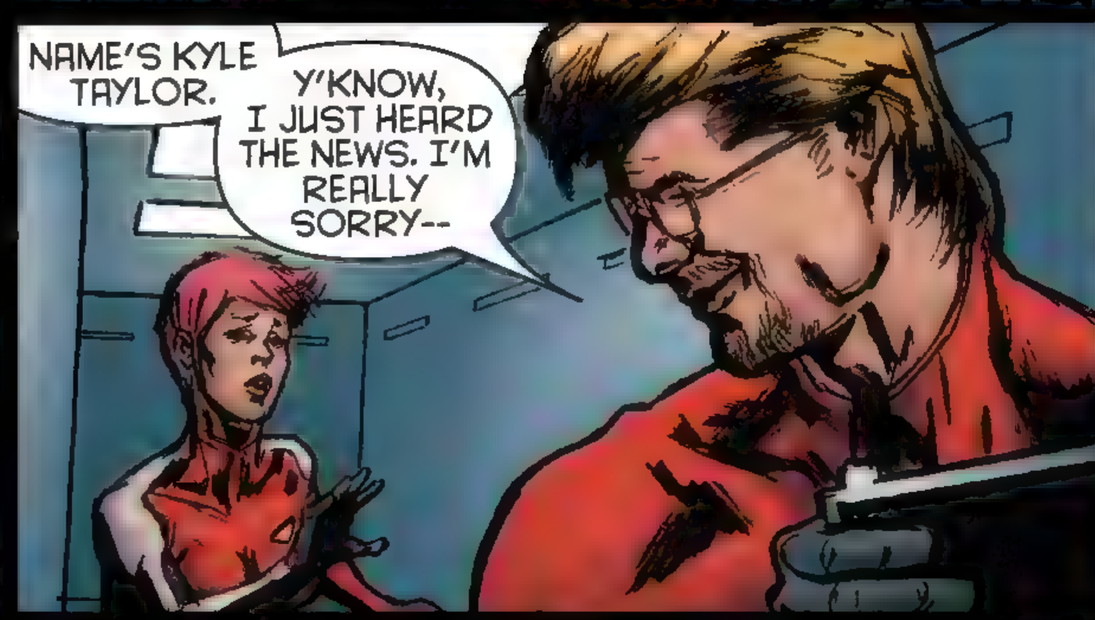
"SO I HOLD MYSELF RESPONSIBLE.

"NOT ONLY FOR LETTING BLOODSHOT SLIP THROUGH OUR FINGERS..."

...BUT, MOST OF ALL, FOR NOT PROTECTING GENIUS FROM HIM IN THE FIRST PLACE.
I'M SURE BLOODSHOT HAS HIS OWN TWISTED RATIONALE FOR IT, BUT HE HAD NO RIGHT TO *RETIRE* A MEMBER OF H.A.R.D. CORPS, ESPECIALLY IN THIS VILE MANNER.
THE EXPLOSIVE FAILSAFE WAS IMPLANTED TO PROTECT OUR PROPRIETARY TECHNOLOGY IN CASE WE LOST SOMEONE IN THE FIELD. IT WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE USED *AGAINST* TEAM MEMBERS AS SOME KIND OF CRUDE *KILL-SWITCH.*
SO WHAT NOW, MR. KOZOL?
I PROMISE YOU WE'RE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO TRACK HIM DOWN AND MAKE HIM PAY.
I JUST DON'T GET IT...
YOU KNOW WHAT I DON'T GET? BLOODSHOT'S OUT THERE CRAWLING AROUND THE DESERT HALF-DEAD...AND WE'RE STILL SITTING HERE TALKING?!
IT'S SIMPLE, FLATLINE. WE HAVE BOMBS IN OUR BRAINS THAT BLOODSHOT'S *NANITES* CAN HACK. HE CAN SHUT DOWN OUR POWERS, KILL US WITH A MERE THOUGHT.
I KNOW YOU WANT REVENGE MORE THAN ANY OF US, BUT THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NOTHING H.A.R.D. CORPS CAN DO.
WELL, THERE IS *ONE* THING...

EVEN BEFORE THIS MORNING'S HORRIFIC EVENTS, EVERYONE KNEW THE LEVERAGE BLOODSHOT HELD OVER H.A.R.D. CORPS WAS UTTERLY UNACCEPTABLE.
SO WE'D ALREADY BEEN WORKING TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD.
AND THOUGH WE HAVEN'T QUITE PERFECTED THIS *PARTICULAR* METHOD, I BELIEVE WE'VE MADE ENOUGH PROGRESS TO PUT IT ON THE TABLE AS A SERIOUS OPTION.
WHAT, MORE IMPLANTS?
WHATEVER IT IS, I'M IN.
ME TOO.
NO. NO MORE IMPLANTS. YOU WOULDN'T GO UNDER THE KNIFE AT ALL.
IT'S A LASER PROCEDURE. FIRST, WE DISARM THE WETWARE'S TRIGGER MECHANISM. THEN, WE TWEAK THE EXISTING HARDWARE, EFFECTIVELY CREATING A TEMPORARY FIREWALL--
ANOTHER FIREWALL, SIR? HE'LL HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH THAT.
SURE, HE'LL EVENTUALLY GET THROUGH IT. BUT NOT FOR FORTY-EIGHT HOURS.
THAT'S FORTY-EIGHT HOURS FROM POINT OF CONTACT, TO BE EXACT. TWO FULL DAYS.
COME ON, PALMER. THAT'S PLENTY OF TIME.
AGREED.
CALL ME WHEN YOU'RE DONE ARGUING OVER THESE @*€€#$%€ DETAILS.
I STILL DON'T LIKE IT.
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE THE ONLY HOLDOUT, PALMER...

HEY, YOU'RE THE NEW TECH WORKING IN LIFELINE COMMAND AND CONTROL, RIGHT?

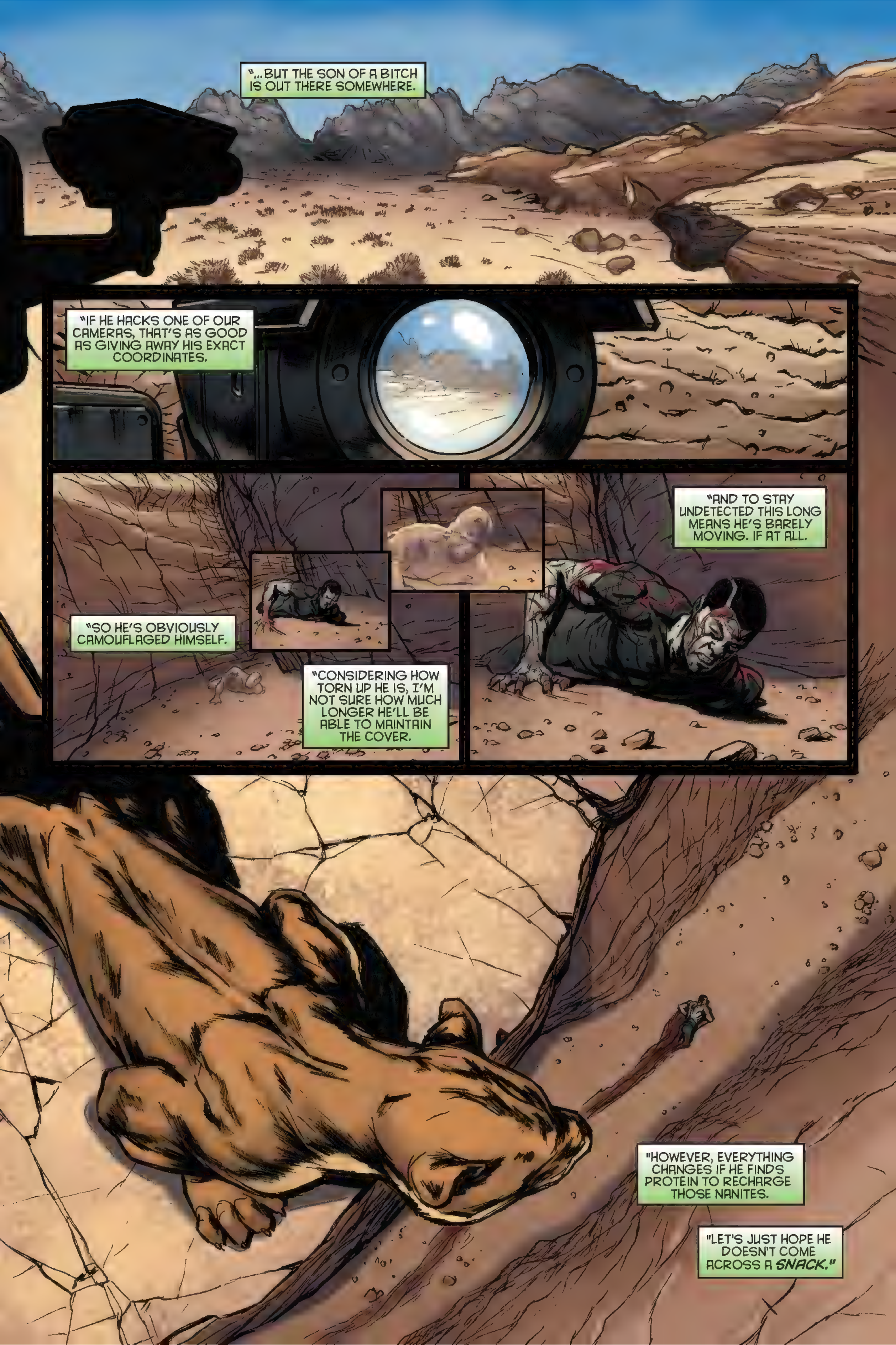

NAME'S KYLE TAYLOR.
Y'KNOW, I JUST HEARD THE NEWS. I'M REALLY SORRY--

YEAH. THAT'S WHAT I WAS HOPING TO TALK ABOUT WITH YOU...
CAN WE GO SOMEWHERE PRIVATE?

PROCEDURE'S ABOUT COMPLETE, SIR. H.A.R.D. CORPS WILL BE READY TO GO IN NO TIME.

ANY SIGN OF BLOODSHOT, SIR?

NOTHING YET...


"...BUT THE SON OF A BITCH IS OUT THERE SOMEWHERE.
"IF HE HACKS ONE OF OUR CAMERAS, THAT'S AS GOOD AS GIVING AWAY HIS EXACT COORDINATES.
"SO HE'S OBVIOUSLY CAMOUFLAGED HIMSELF.
"CONSIDERING HOW TORN UP HE IS, I'M NOT SURE HOW MUCH LONGER HE'LL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THE COVER.
"AND TO STAY UNDETECTED THIS LONG MEANS HE'S BARELY MOVING. IF AT ALL.
"HOWEVER, EVERYTHING CHANGES IF HE FINDS PROTEIN TO RECHARGE THOSE NANITES.
"LET'S JUST HOPE HE DOESN'T COME ACROSS A *SNACK.*"

LISTEN, WE NEED TO HAVE A QUICK WORD ABOUT THE LENGTH OF THIS MISSION.
WELL, SIR, WE'VE RUN THROUGH VARIOUS SCENARIOS BASED ON THE FORTY-EIGHT-HOUR TIMEFRAME YOU PROVIDED US AND--

SCRAP THAT.
NEW TIMEFRAME IS *NINETY MINUTES.*

NINETY *MINUTES?!*
I MUST NOT HAVE HEARD CORRECTLY, SIR...
YOU SAID AN HOUR AND A HALF INTO THIS OP BLOODSHOT WILL BE ABLE TO PUNCH THROUGH THE NEW FIREWALL AND JUST SHUT DOWN H.A.R.D. CORPS'S POWERS?

NO--HE'LL BE ABLE TO DETONATE THE WETWARE. IT'LL BE GAME OVER.
BUT I THOUGHT WE WERE DISABLING THE EXPLOSIVES FOR THIS PARTICULAR MISSION?
YOU HONESTLY THINK WE HAVE TIME FOR A PROCEDURE THAT INVASIVE? WE'RE RUNNING ON A TICKING CLOCK HERE.

LOOK, I MADE AN OVERLY OPTIMISTIC ASSESSMENT DURING THE BRIEFING, BUT WE CAN'T HAVE ANY MORE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THIS MISSION. WE HAVE TO GO OUT THERE AND JUST GET THIS DONE.
IF THAT MEANS KEEPING FOLKS ON A "NEED TO KNOW," THAT'S WHAT WE DO.

YES, SIR.
GOOD. NO ROOM FOR ERROR, COMMANDER.
WE'LL HAVE ONE CHANCE. LET'S MAKE IT COUNT.

CALL'S DUE ANYTIME NOW, PEOPLE. STAND BY.
FLATLINE, HOW YOU DOIN'?
FINE, SIR.
GOOD. I NEED YOU FOCUSED. IT'S THE ONLY WAY WE'RE GONNA COMPLETE THIS MISSION, SET THINGS RIGHT FOR GENIUS...
Y'KNOW...
MAYBE IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.
WHAT?
VAGABOND. DON'T.
BLOODSHOT WASN'T RIGHT TO KILL GENIUS ON THE SPOT LIKE THAT, SURE.
BUT FROM WHAT I HEARD FROM THE FOOTAGE, HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY ILL WILL TOWARD THE GUY.
GENIUS HIMSELF ADMITTED HIS DAYS WERE NUMBERED...
YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY.
HOW IT HURTS LESS IF YOU RIP THE BAND-AID OFF FAST--
BAND-AID?!
YOU HEARTLESS SON OF A--
GRANITE!

STAND DOWN. NOW.
LOOK, I WAS JUST SAYIN'--
SHUT YOUR MOUTH, VAGABOND, BEFORE I SHUT IT FOR YOU.
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR HALF-BAKED DEVIL'S ADVOCATE GARBAGE.
WE'RE ALL AWARE HOW LITTLE YOU VALUE YOUR OWN LIFE.
AND THAT YOU CAN'T EVEN THINK OF GETTING OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING WITHOUT REACHING FOR A BOTTLE...
BUT IF IT WAS YOU WHO'D BEEN KILLED INSTEAD OF GENIUS, NONE OF THAT WOULD MATTER.
NO ONE ON THIS BIRD WOULD BE ARGUING OVER THE PATHETIC DEATH-WISH THAT HAS DEFINED YOUR LIFE.
ALL WE'D BE DISCUSSING IS WHAT WE'RE GONNA DO WHEN WE FIND THAT THING THAT MURDERED A MEMBER OF THIS TEAM.
TARGET'S JUST BEEN CONFIRMED.
OP'S A GO.
YOU HEARD THE MAN.
FORTY-EIGHT HOURS TO BRING IN BLOODSHOT.
CLOCK STARTS RUNNING AT POINT OF CONTACT.

PALMER?
FINAL

PALMER, I THINK I LANDED A GOOD ONE, BUT YOU'D BETTER GET UP HERE FAS--
--UUUFF
THIP THIP THIP THIP THIP
VAGABOND! HOLD YOUR FIRE, DAMN IT!
GRANITE'S UP THERE! HE'S GOT HER!
PING PING PING PING PING PING PING
DOWN! DOWN!
PALMER, IT'S BLOODSHOT.
WE ALL NEED TO TAKE A DEEP BREATH HERE.
LET'S TALK THIS OUT BEFORE ANYONE ELSE GETS KILLED...

WHAT'S THERE TO TALK ABOUT?
THERE'S NOTHIN' YOU CAN SAY TO MAKE THIS RIGHT.
COME ON, PALMER. I OBVIOUSLY DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH YOU AND YOUR TEAM.
HELL, IF I DID, YOU'D BE DEAD ALREADY. YOU KNOW I CAN ALWAYS HACK...
...HEH. THAT'S CUTE...
NEW ENCRYPTION, HUH?
P.R.S. HAS GOTTEN SMARTER, BUT NOT MUCH. AN HOUR FROM NOW, YOU'LL REGRET NOT HEARING ME OUT.
ONE HOUR?!
HE'S BLUFFING.
I PROMISE YOU I'M NOT.
TAYLOR, IT'S FLATLINE ON THE PRIVATE CHANNEL. YOU COPY?
COPY, FLATLINE. COMING IN LOUD AND CLEAR.
IS IT THAT TIME?
LIFELINE COMMAND AND CONTROL...
IT IS... INITIATE OMEGA SEQUENCE.
AND YOU'RE SURE ABOUT THIS?
NEVER BEEN MORE SURE OF ANYTHING.
I APPRECIATE THIS, TAYLOR.

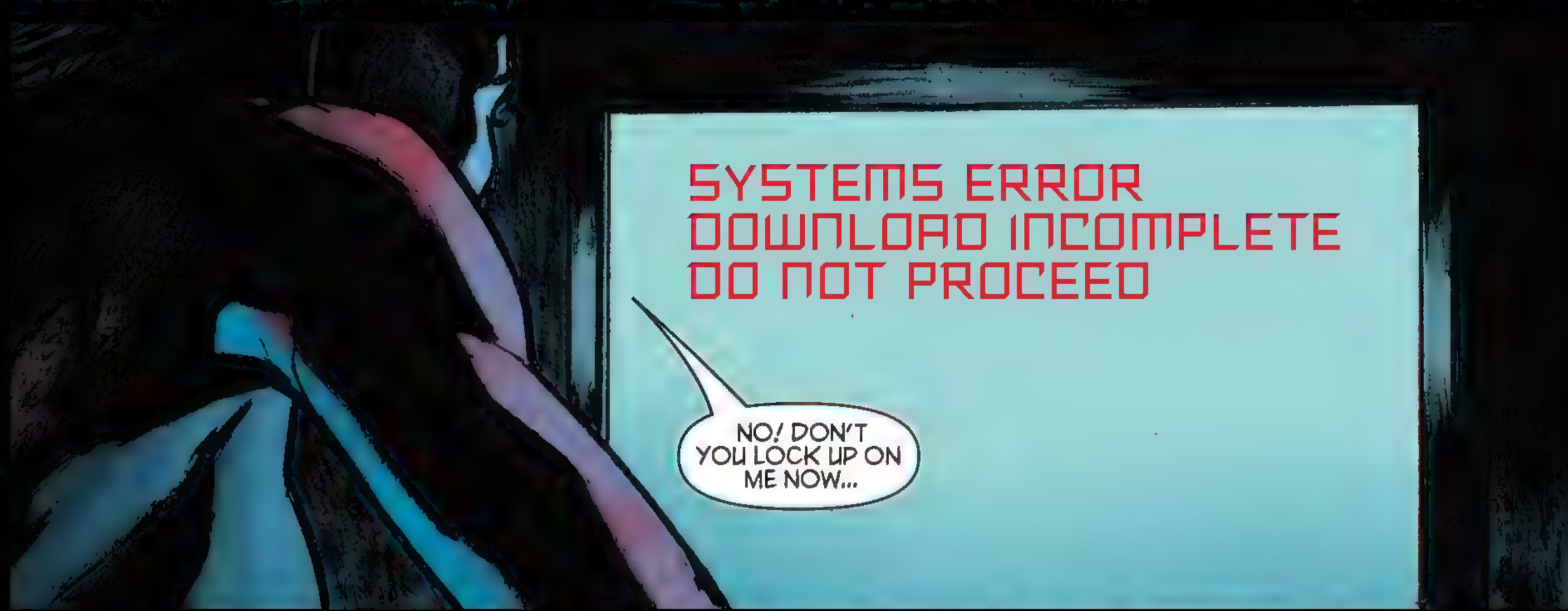
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA... WHAT'S THIS PRESET FLATLINE'S DOWNLOADING?
THIS IS THE BEE STING OF ALL BEE STINGS.
HER BODY WON'T BE ABLE TO HANDLE ALL THIS POWER. IT'LL KILL HER.

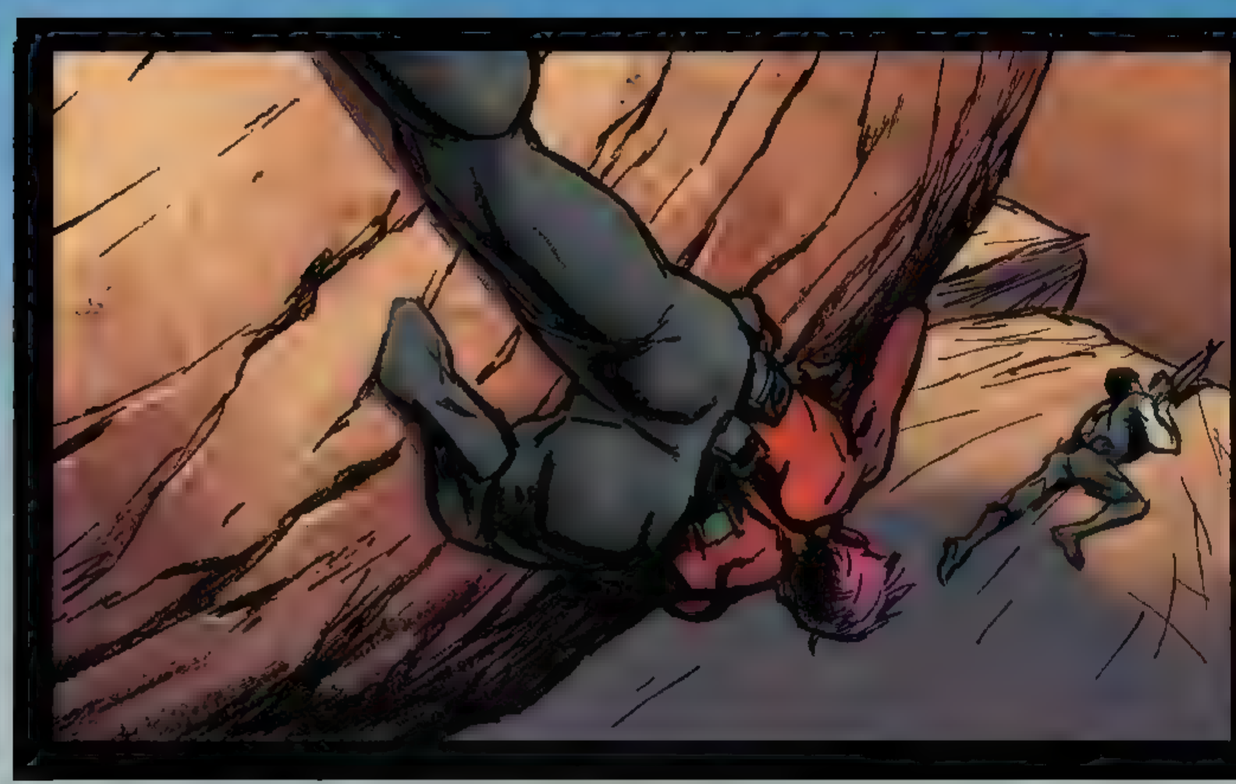
TAYLOR, CANCEL THAT DOWNLOAD RIGHT NOW!
I'M SORRY. I CAN'T DO THAT-- I WON'T...
I'M ORDERING YOU!

"SO WHAT IF SHE'S WILLING TO SACRIFICE HERSELF?
"SOMEONE'S GONNA HAVE TO. IT'S THE ONLY WAY WE CAN STOP THIS THING.
"WE'RE LUCKY SHE'S STEPPING UP, IF SHE DOESN'T THEY'RE ALL DEAD..."

--THEN WE'LL BE--
--UUFF!
THIS CONVERSATION'S OVER.

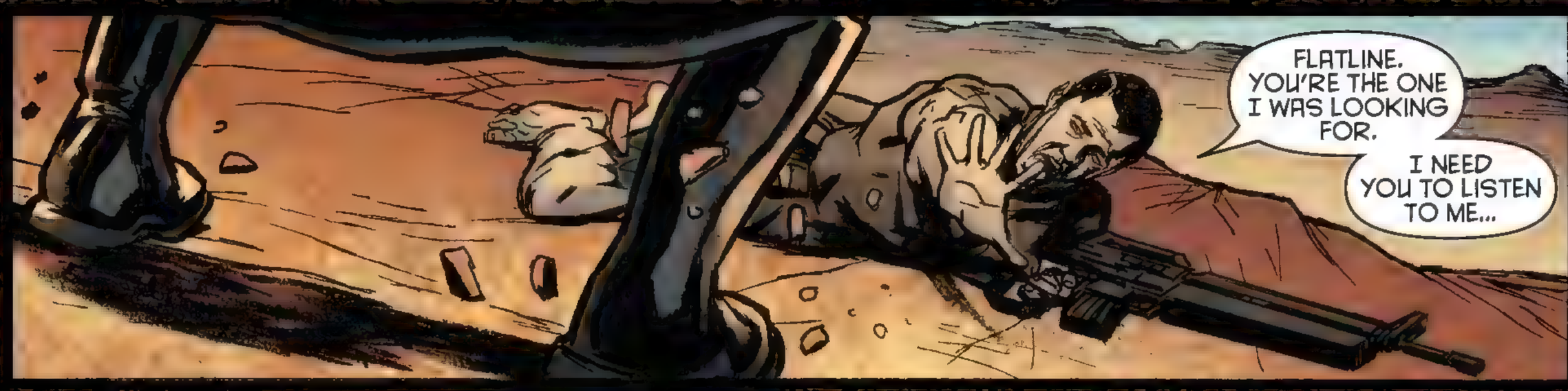
YOU ABSOLUTE MORON... WHAT HAVE YOU...?
TEK TEK TEK TEK

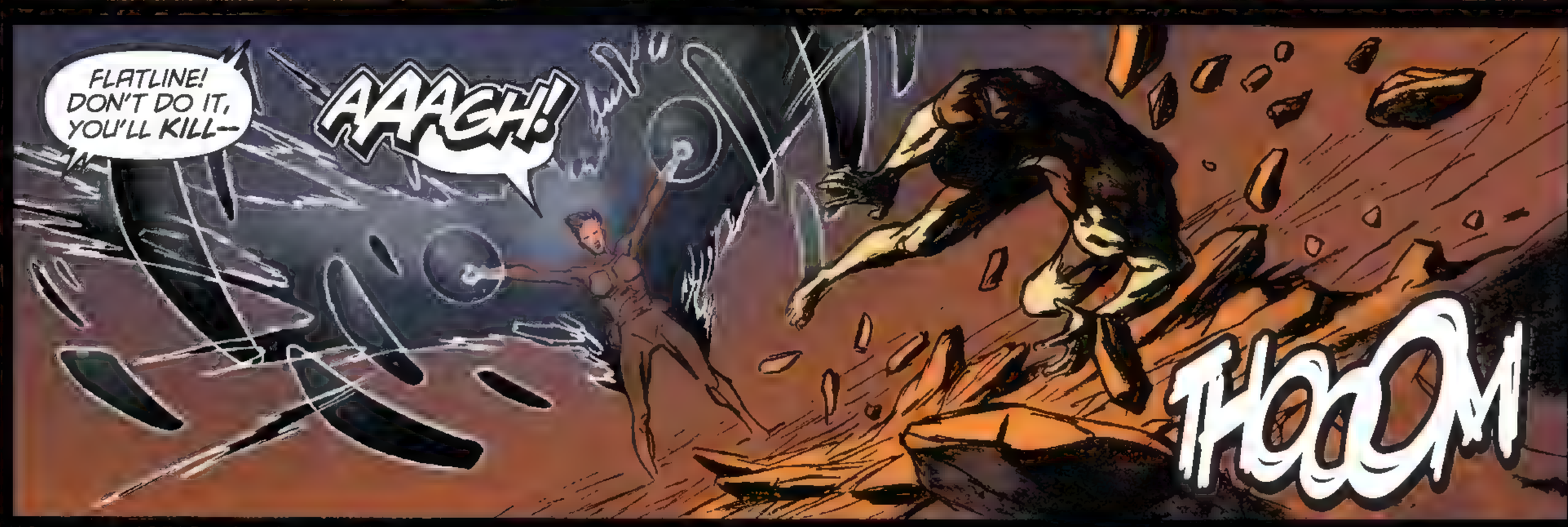

SYSTEMS ERROR
DOWNLOAD INCOMPLETE
DO NOT PROCEED
NO! DON'T YOU LOCK UP ON ME NOW...



FLATLINE! THIS IS LIFELINE. DO **NOT**--I REPEAT--DO **NOT** EXECUTE THE OMEGA PRESET!

YOU BASTARD.





KRAAKKK
THUNK

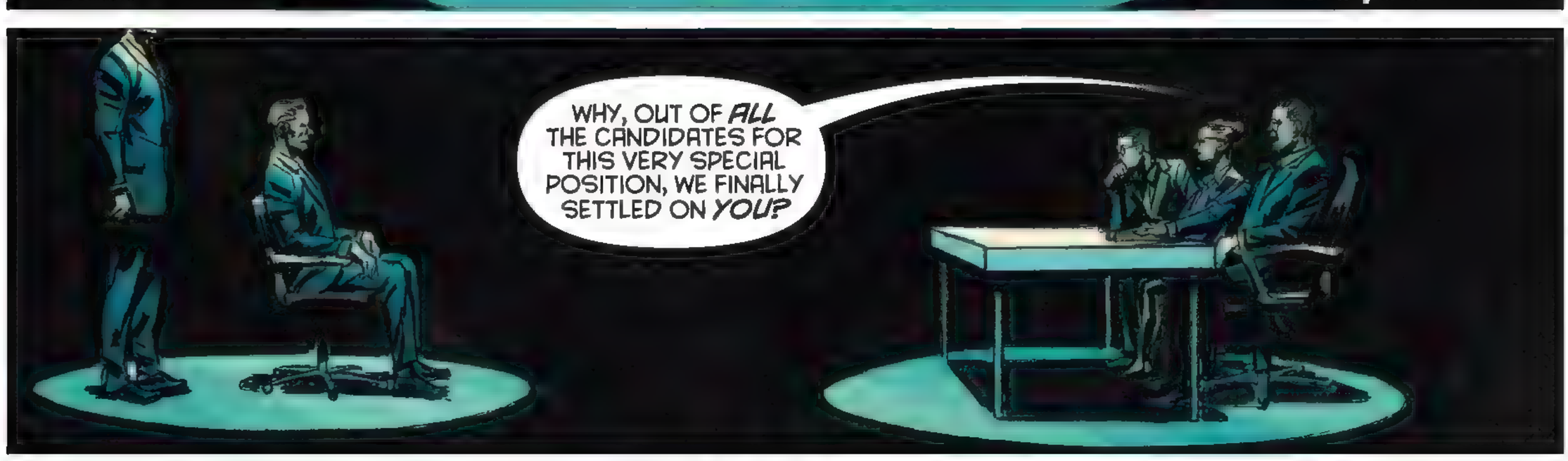
...I GOT HIM...YOU COPY THAT, PALMER?
...PALMER? VAGABOND? ANYBODY COPY?
...FINISH YOU WITH MY BARE HANDS IF I HAVE TO...
FLATLINE...
I DIDN'T... KILL GENIUS...
...WAS KOZOL.
YOU'RE A LIAR...THERE'S NO WAY HE...
...SET ME UP. HE WAS--NNH--WATCHING ON A FEED...WAITED FOR HIS CHANCE...BLEW GENIUS'S IMPLANTS.
MY NANITES... DETECTED THE SIGNAL... CAME FROM KOZOL'S OFFICE...HE PUSHED THE BUTTON HIMSELF...
NO, YOU'RE TRYING TO CONFUSE ME, I--
...PERFECT PLAY...SOLVES TWO PROBLEMS...
...GENIUS'S IMPLANTS WERE DEGRADING. HE WAS A DAMAGED ASSET...CHEAPER TO REPLACE THAN TO FIX...
...AND ME... I'M FREE NOW... SO KOZOL'S BEEN LOOKING FOR A WAY TO SLAP A LEASH ON ME...

BUT I SAW THE FOOTAGE.
WHY'D YOU SAY WHAT YOU SAID?
FOR HIM TO JUST GET IT OVER WITH. THAT YOU WERE SORRY.
WE WERE TALKING ABOUT YOU, FLATLINE.
I WAS TELLING HIM HE NEEDED TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, COME CLEAN ABOUT HIS CONDITION...
I DUNNO... I'M NOT SURE I...
FLATLINE, YOU'VE GOT TO TELL THE OTHERS, TELL THEM KOZOL'S--
FLATLINE...
FLATLINE?
THE BASTARD'S DEFINITELY DOWN FOR NOW.
BUT I'M AFRAID WE MAY HAVE LOST FLATLINE...

HOW FAR OUT ARE YOU, KOZOL?
FIVE MINUTES.
KEEP AN EYE ON HIM, BUT HOLD YOUR CURRENT POSITION UNTIL I ARRIVE.
I'M SIGNING OFF NOW.
YOU HEAR THAT?
YES, SIR.
GOOD. YOU KNOW WHAT THE PRIORITY IS...
"ANYONE--ANYONE-- GETS IN THE WAY, YOU TAKE THEM OUT."

DUFFY BOUDREAU | CHRISTOS GAGE | AL BARRIONUEVO | MATT MILLA
VALIANT
#23
BLOODSHOT
H.A.R.D. CORPS
BLOODSHOT VS. H.A.R.D. CORPS!
ALBARRIONUEVO

EMERGENCY P.R.S. BOARD MEETING. UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.
36 HOURS FROM NOW.
OH, MORRIS...
YOU KNOW WHY YOU WERE HIRED HERE, SON?


WHY, OUT OF ALL THE CANDIDATES FOR THIS VERY SPECIAL POSITION, WE FINALLY SETTLED ON YOU?

COULDN'T TELL YOU, SIR.
OF COURSE YOU CAN. IT WAS YOUR BOOK!
WE ALL LOVED IT. THIS GLORIOUS GEM OF BEST-SELLING CORPORATE WISDOM.
PROFILES IN CONQUEST: WHY WINNERS WIN AND LOSERS LOSE. BY MORRIS KOZOL, C-E-O.

TITLE'S TOO DAMN LONG, BUT THERE'S SOME BRILLIANT STUFF IN HERE.
ESPECIALLY THE BIT ABOUT "UNWAVERING LEADERSHIP IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELMING ADVERSITY."

YOU KNOW, LOOKING AT THE MAN ON THE BACK COVER OF THIS BOOK, AND THEN AT THE ONE SITTING IN FRONT OF ME NOW, I GET A LITTLE CONFUSED.
ARE THESE TWO GUYS REALLY EVEN THE SAME PERSON?
IS SOMEONE PULLIN' ONE OVER ON ME?

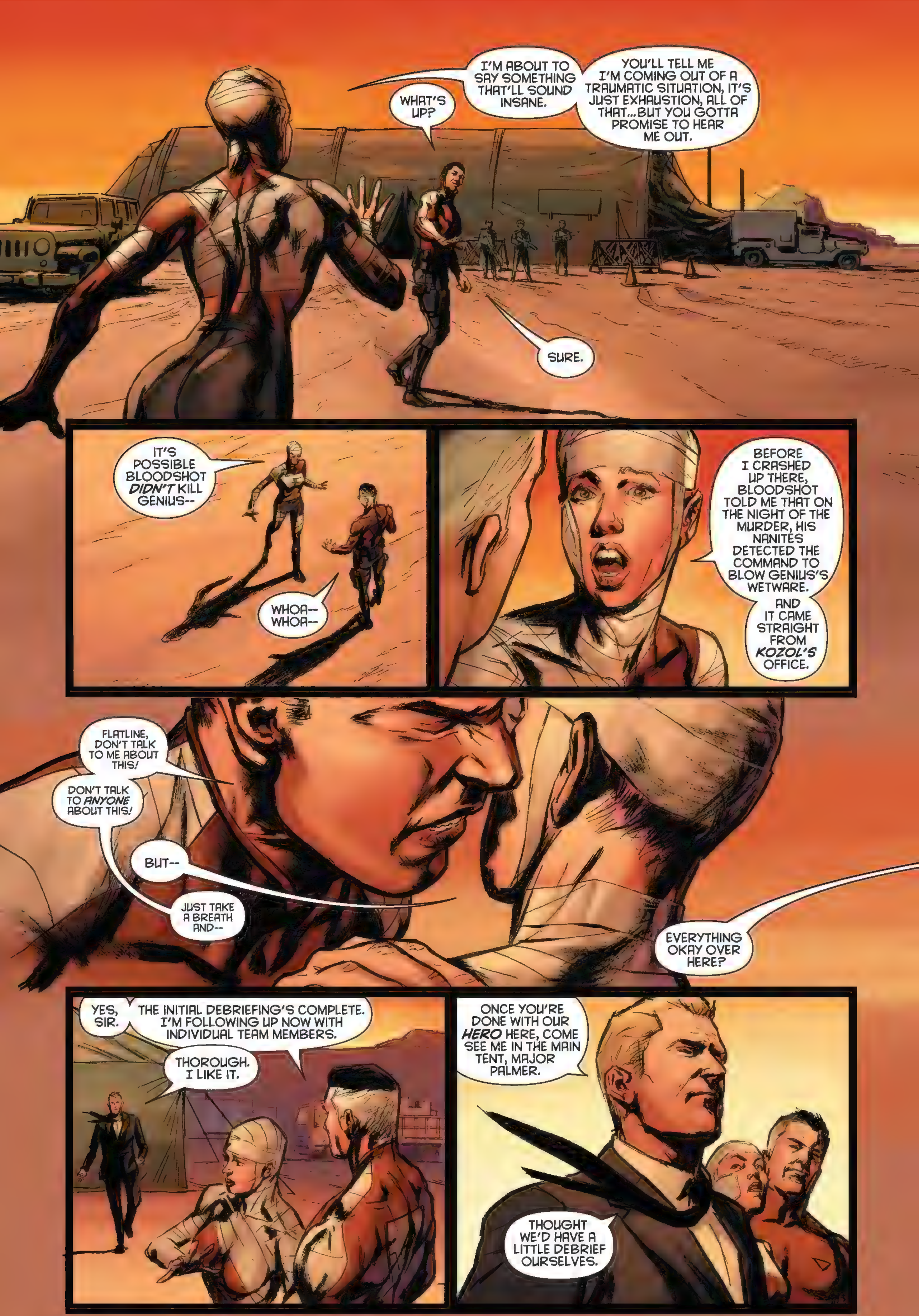
THONK
BECAUSE A MAN WHO UNDERSTANDS *TRUE LEADERSHIP* COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DROPPING THE STRING OF *TURDS* THAT HAS MARKED YOUR TENURE AT P.R.S. THUS FAR.
FOR GOD'S SAKE, MORRIS, WHERE DO WE START?
JUST LAST MONTH, NOT ONLY DID YOU COMPLETELY BOTCH THE OPERATION TO RECAPTURE THE PSIOT ARCHER, BUT YOU ALLOWED THAT GIANT DRUNKEN PARTNER OF HIS TO INFILTRATE AND RUN WILD ALL OVER ONE OF OUR MOST SECURE FACILITIES.
AND WE CAN KEEP GOIN' DOWN THIS LIST--
ENOUGH WITH THE THEATER.
YOU THINK I'VE NEVER BEEN IN THE HOT SEAT BEFORE?
JUST GET ON WITH IT.
WELL, WE CAN'T GET ON WITH ANYTHING UNTIL WE GET *SOME* EXPLANATION FOR THE MOST RECENT *INCIDENT.*
WHAT HAPPENED OUT THERE IN THE DESERT, KOZOL?
BLOODSHOT. I HAD HIM.
THEN EVERYTHING JUST WENT TO HELL...

EIGHT MILES NORTH OF PROJECT RISING SPIRIT RESEARCH FACILITY THETA.
NEVADA.
NOW.
HEADS UP, H.A.R.D. CORPS. I JUST GOT WORD FROM KOZOL...
"WE GOT THE *BASTARD.*
"THERE WAS A BIT OF A DELAY, BECAUSE FOR A WHILE THERE WE COULDN'T *FIND* HIS LOWER HALF.
"FINALLY YANKED IT FROM A PILE OF RUBBLE FOUR HUNDRED YARDS DOWN THE DAMN SLOPE..."

...NOW THEY'VE GOT BLOODSHOT IN A SPECIAL CONTAINMENT UNIT. PUTTING THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER BEFORE THEY MOTHBALL HIM. HE'S LOCKED IN THERE NICE AND TIGHT.

THANK GOD, PALMER.

THIS WAS ALL *YOU TWO.* YOU GUYS JUST WENT IN THERE AND TOOK HIM DOWN.


WHAT'S UP?
I'M ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING THAT'LL SOUND INSANE.
YOU'LL TELL ME I'M COMING OUT OF A TRAUMATIC SITUATION, IT'S JUST EXHAUSTION, ALL OF THAT...BUT YOU GOTTA PROMISE TO HEAR ME OUT.
SURE.
IT'S POSSIBLE BLOODSHOT *DIDN'T* KILL GENIUS--
WHOA-- WHOA--
BEFORE I CRASHED UP THERE, BLOODSHOT TOLD ME THAT ON THE NIGHT OF THE MURDER, HIS NANITES DETECTED THE COMMAND TO BLOW GENIUS'S WETWARE.
AND IT CAME STRAIGHT FROM *KOZOL'S* OFFICE.
FLATLINE, DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT THIS!
DON'T TALK TO *ANYONE* ABOUT THIS!
BUT--
JUST TAKE A BREATH AND--
EVERYTHING OKAY OVER HERE?
YES, SIR.
THE INITIAL DEBRIEFING'S COMPLETE. I'M FOLLOWING UP NOW WITH INDIVIDUAL TEAM MEMBERS.
THOROUGH. I LIKE IT.
ONCE YOU'RE DONE WITH OUR *HERO* HERE, COME SEE ME IN THE MAIN TENT, MAJOR PALMER.
THOUGHT WE'D HAVE A LITTLE DEBRIEF OURSELVES.

"I DON'T CARE *HOW* EXPENSIVE THE THING IS. WHAT GOOD IS A PIECE OF EQUIPMENT IF IT CAN'T BE USED FOR ITS INTENDED PURPOSE?

"THIS TEMPORARY DECOMMISSION WILL GET HIM PREPPED FOR A TOTAL OVERHAUL AND REBOOT. WE'LL WIPE HIS MEMORY, FINALLY GET RID OF THE *ILLUSORY* SENSE OF *SELF* THAT'S BEEN CAUSING SO MANY PROBLEMS.

"WE'RE NOT NECESSARILY STARTING FROM SCRATCH, BUT WHEN YOU SEE HOW MUCH MORE *CONTROL* WE'LL HAVE AFTER ALL THIS, YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT'S THE SAME BLOODSHOT.

"THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF THIS SPECIAL UNIT. I CALL IT *'THE TOMB.'*

"IT DOES IT ALL-- CONTAINMENT, REPAIR, LONG-TERM STORAGE. IT'S MOBILE, FOR EMERGENCIES LIKE THIS."

IT'LL BE HIS NEW *HOME* IN BETWEEN MISSIONS.

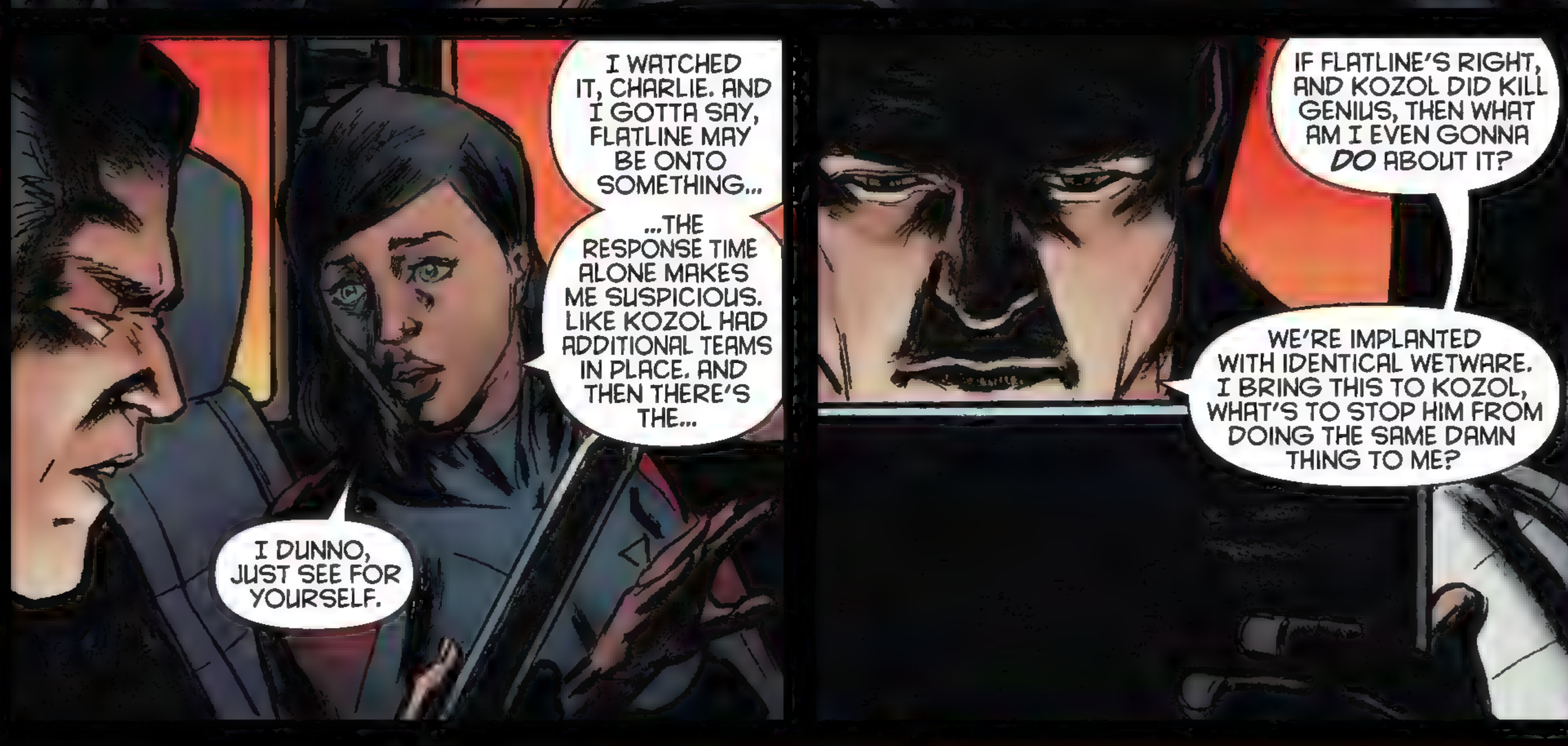
USUALLY NOT ONE TO TOOT MY OWN HORN, BUT I'M VERY PROUD OF THIS CONTRAPTION. THE TOMB'S BEEN MY SECRET PROJECT FOR SOME TIME NOW.

ENGINEERED FOR THIS EXACT MOMENT. WE ALL KNEW IT WAS A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE'D LASH OUT AGAIN.

HOW'S THE TEAM DOING, PALMER? WHAT'S MORALE LIKE?
EVERYONE'S STILL CATCHING THEIR BREATH, BUT SPIRITS ARE HIGH.
YOU KNOW, FLATLINE DIDN'T LOOK SO GOOD.
SHE SEEMED...JUMPY. ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE SAW ME.
ANY REASON FOR THAT?
SHE TOOK THE WORST OF IT UP THERE.
NO SURPRISE SHE'S A BIT FLUSTERED.
THAT'S ALL IT IS, HUH?
FAR AS I KNOW.
IF YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SOMETHING ELSE, YOU'D TELL ME, RIGHT?
ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, I'M NOT FOLLOWING...
WHAT ELSE WOULD IT BE?
HEH. WHO KNOWS? MAKING SURE WE HAVE ALL THE BASES COVERED.
LIKE YOU SAID, IT'S BEEN A ROUGH ONE...

"...JUST A FEW MORE HOURS, AND WE'LL HAVE THIS THING DONE AND DUSTED."
WE'RE IN A BLIND SPOT HERE, CHARLIE, BUT WE STILL NEED TO MAKE IT QUICK. IT'LL LOOK STRANGE IF I'M AWAY FROM LIFELINE H.Q. MUCH LONGER...

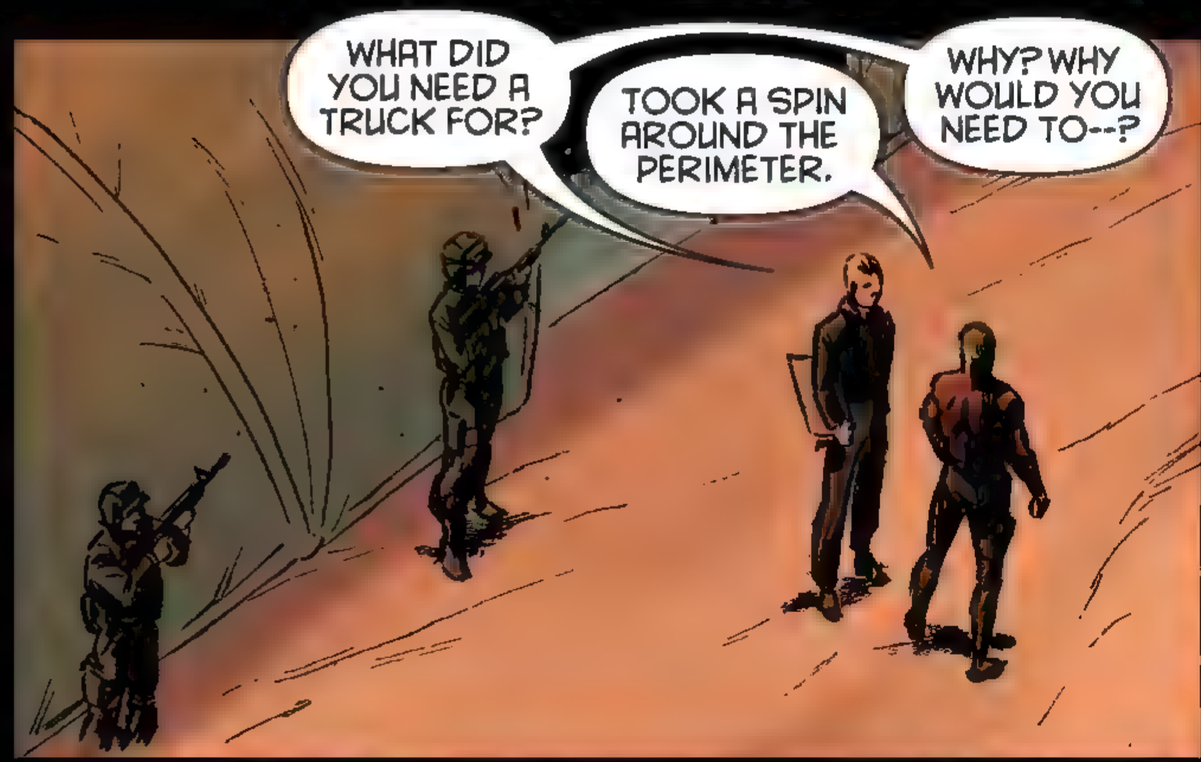
WHAT'D YOU FIND, CAROL?
FIRST, THE FOOTAGE OF GENIUS' DEATH WAS RECENTLY DELETED.
I HAVE THIS BACKUP BECAUSE I COPY EVERY-THING AS IT COMES IN, ARCHIVE IT OFF-BOOK.
I'VE WORKED HERE TOO LONG TO TRUST P.R.S.'S RECORD-KEEPING.


I WATCHED IT, CHARLIE. AND I GOTTA SAY, FLATLINE MAY BE ONTO SOMETHING...
...THE RESPONSE TIME ALONE MAKES ME SUSPICIOUS. LIKE KOZOL HAD ADDITIONAL TEAMS IN PLACE. AND THEN THERE'S THE...
I DUNNO, JUST SEE FOR YOURSELF.
IF FLATLINE'S RIGHT, AND KOZOL DID KILL GENIUS, THEN WHAT AM I EVEN GONNA DO ABOUT IT?
WE'RE IMPLANTED WITH IDENTICAL WETWARE. I BRING THIS TO KOZOL, WHAT'S TO STOP HIM FROM DOING THE SAME DAMN THING TO ME?

IT'D BE SUICIDAL TO CONFRONT KOZOL.
KEEP IT QUIET FOR NOW, CHARLIE.
I PROMISE YOU, WE'LL FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS.

FLATLINE...
I FOUND A COPY OF THE FOOTAGE.
AND...?
WHAT? AFRAID TO TELL ME I'M CRAZY?
AFRAID TO TELL YOU THE OPPOSITE.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE SHOULD DO ANYTHING RIGHT NOW.
WE HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THIS, CONSIDER OUR OPTIONS.
LIKE I SAID, WE CAN'T GET CAUGHT EVEN TALKING ABOUT IT.
I UNDERSTAND.
THANK YOU, PALMER.
MAJOR PALMER...
DIRECTOR KOZOL WOULD LIKE ANOTHER WORD WITH YOU, SIR.

FLATLINE, JUST SIT TIGHT. OKAY?
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
OPTIONS...
I WAS HOPIN' FOR A LITTLE MORE ACTION. I'M FALLIN' ASLEEP OUT HERE.
WE GET PAID EITHER WAY. WHO GIVES A...
YOU TWO.
WE'RE ROTATING WATCH.
REPORT TO THE SOUTH PERIMETER IMMEDIATELY.
WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE THE POST UNMANNED.
I'LL COVER UNTIL YOUR REPLACEMENTS ARRIVE.
BUT WITHOUT AN ORDER--
I'M GIVING THE ORDER NOW.
OR YOU WANT ME TO CALL MAJOR PALMER OVER TO GIVE IT AGAIN? 'CAUSE HE'D LOVE THAT.
NOT NECESSARY, MA'AM.
WE'RE ON THE WAY.

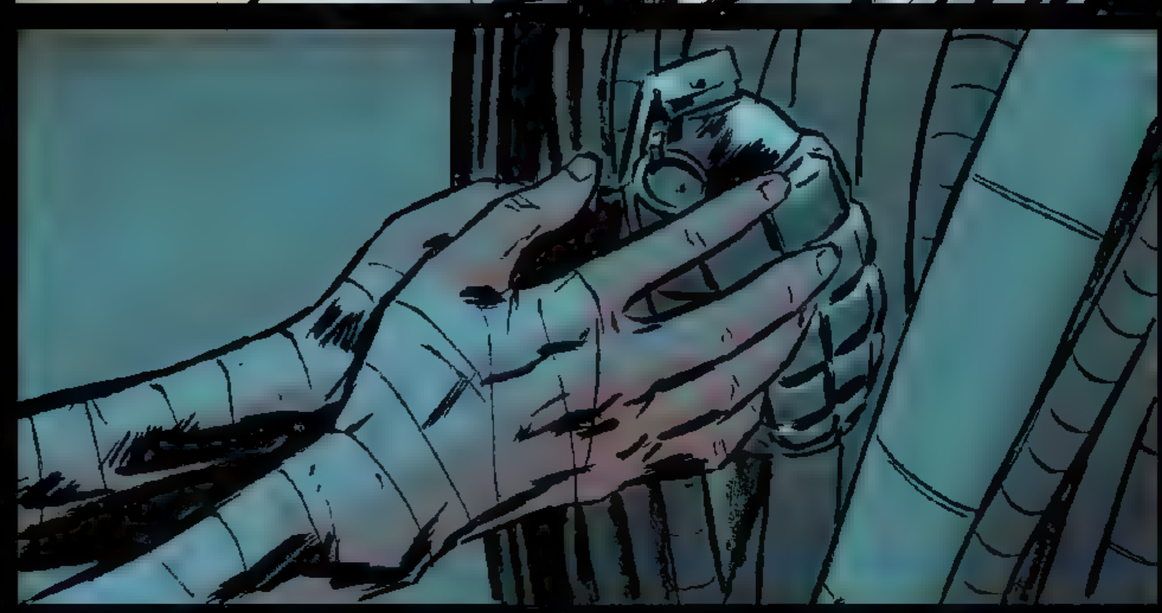

WHAT DID YOU NEED A TRUCK FOR?
TOOK A SPIN AROUND THE PERIMETER.
WHY? WHY WOULD YOU NEED TO--?

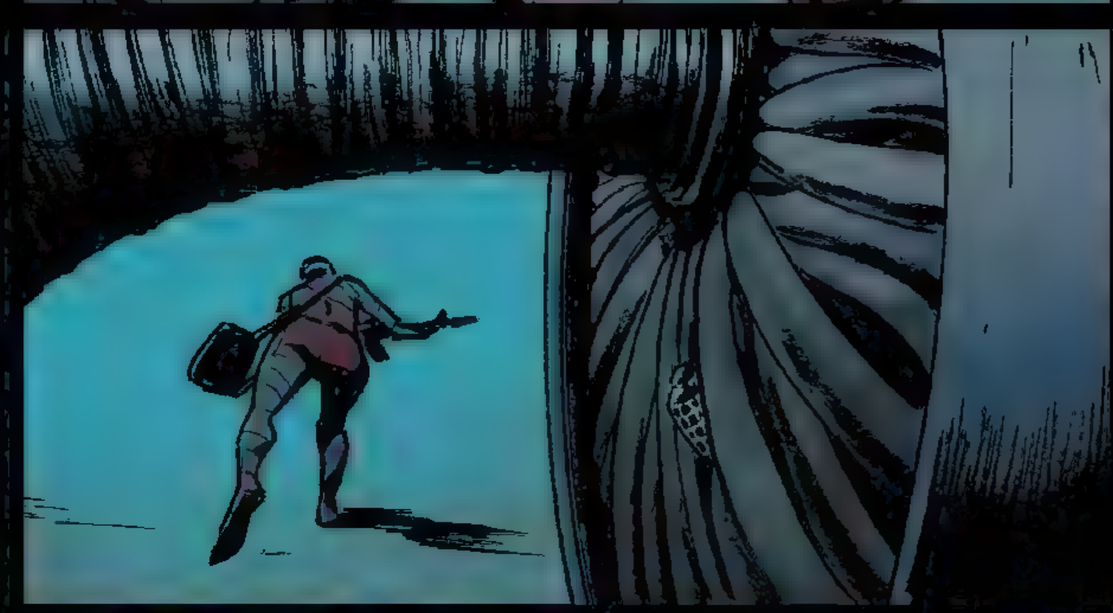
THOOOOOM

WHAT THE...

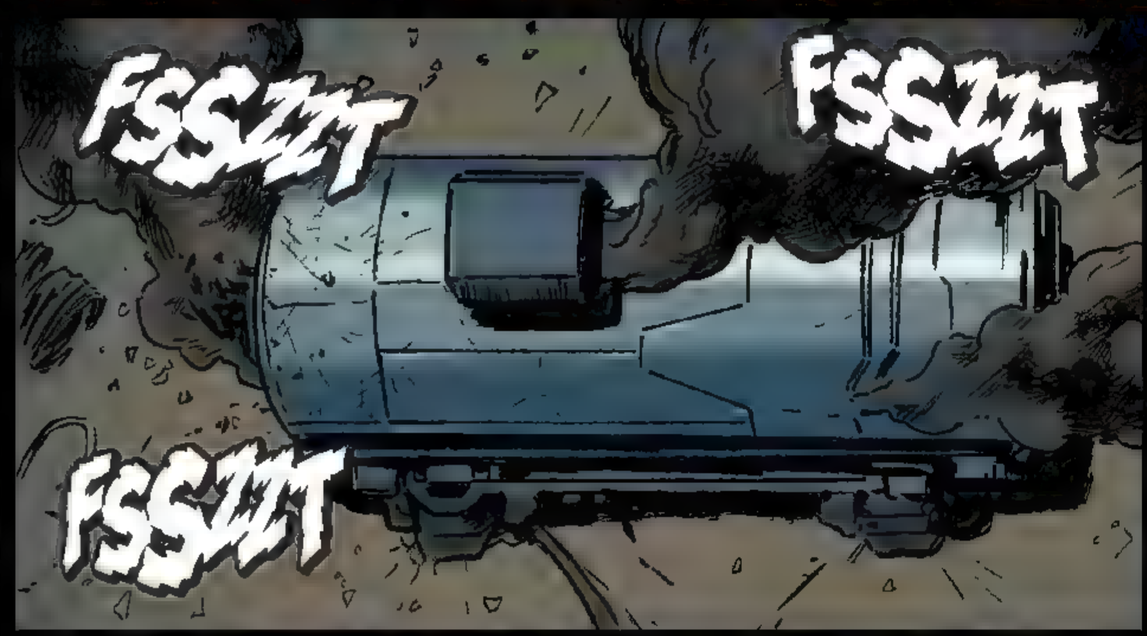
BACK TO YOUR STATIONS! NOW, DAMN IT!

HEY, YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE IN HERE.
UFF--!





BAFF
HOOOOOOM


FSSZZT
FSSZZT
FSSZZT

K-THRAAAMMMMMM
NO NO NO NO NO NO...
KOZOL.
KRUNCH
ACCK!

HUFF... HUFF...HUFF
WHERE YOU RUNNING TO, YOU LITTLE...
GO! GO! GO! GO!

BLOODSHOT! DON'T!

HHRNN!

YOU TWO HAVE NO *IDEA* WHAT YOU'RE DOING!

FIRE!

LIFELINE! INITIATE SEQUENCE FIVE-ALPHA-THREE...

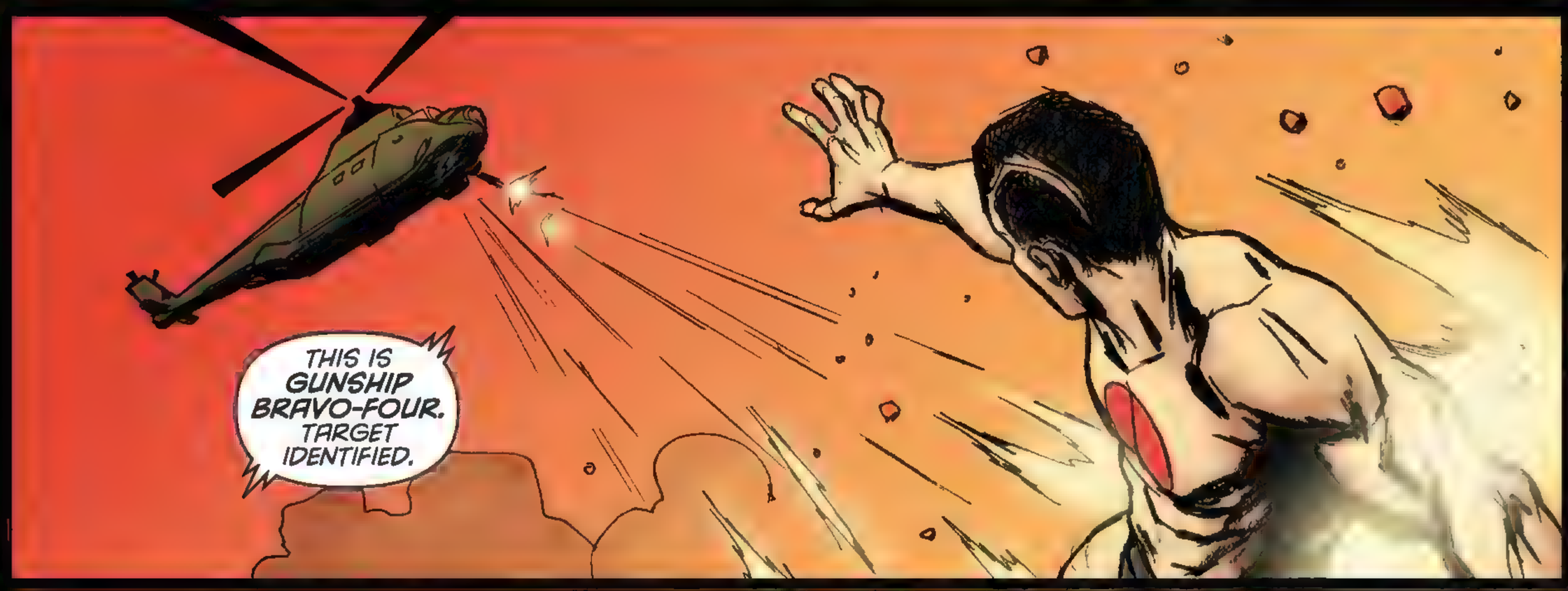
WOOOOOOSH

PPFFSSSZZTTT...

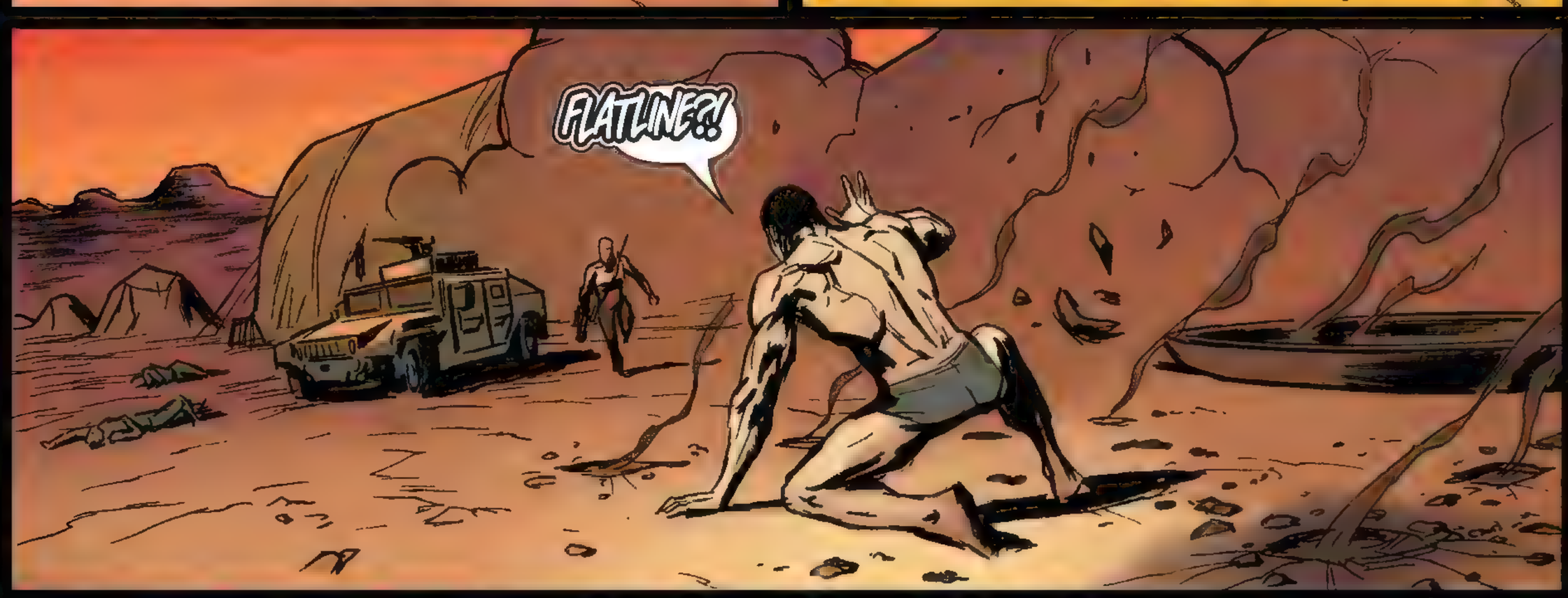
NO! NO MORE OF THIS...

HE'S HACKED THE-- ARGGHH!

AAAHHHHH!


THIS IS GUNSHIP BRAVO-FOUR. TARGET IDENTIFIED.

PPPPFFTTT--


FLATLINE?!

YOU BROKE ME OUT?
I'M SORRY, BLOODSHOT. I TOLD PALMER...
...BUT I JUST KNEW HE WASN'T GONNA DO ANYTHING. I HAD TO--

INCOMING. WATCH IT.
THIP
THIP
THIP

PALMER, HE'S CUT US OFF FROM LIFELINE!
JUST TAKE THE RIFLE! YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN USING IT ANYWAY!
PALMER, I HOPE YOU CAN HEAR ME. BECAUSE THIS IS THE LAST THING I'M EVER GONNA SAY TO YOU...
...YESTERDAY I GAVE YOU A CHANCE TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT.
FLATLINE HERE SAYS SHE GAVE YOU ANOTHER ONE TODAY.
SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU'RE JUST NOT INTERESTED.
BLOODSHOT, LISTEN, I--
IT'S OVER, PALMER. YOU DID THIS TO YOURSELF.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
KOZOL'S GOT THESE GUYS UNDER HIS THUMB. IT'S SUICIDE TO TURN ON HIM.
AND SINCE THEY WON'T BACK DOWN...
...I HAVE TO DETONATE THEIR WETWARE.

I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE.

BACKUP WILL BE HERE IN FULL FORCE IN A MATTER OF MINUTES. WE'LL BE TRAPPED.
I CAN'T THINK OF ANOTHER WAY WE CAN BOTH ESCAPE. THEY'RE DEAD EITHER WAY.

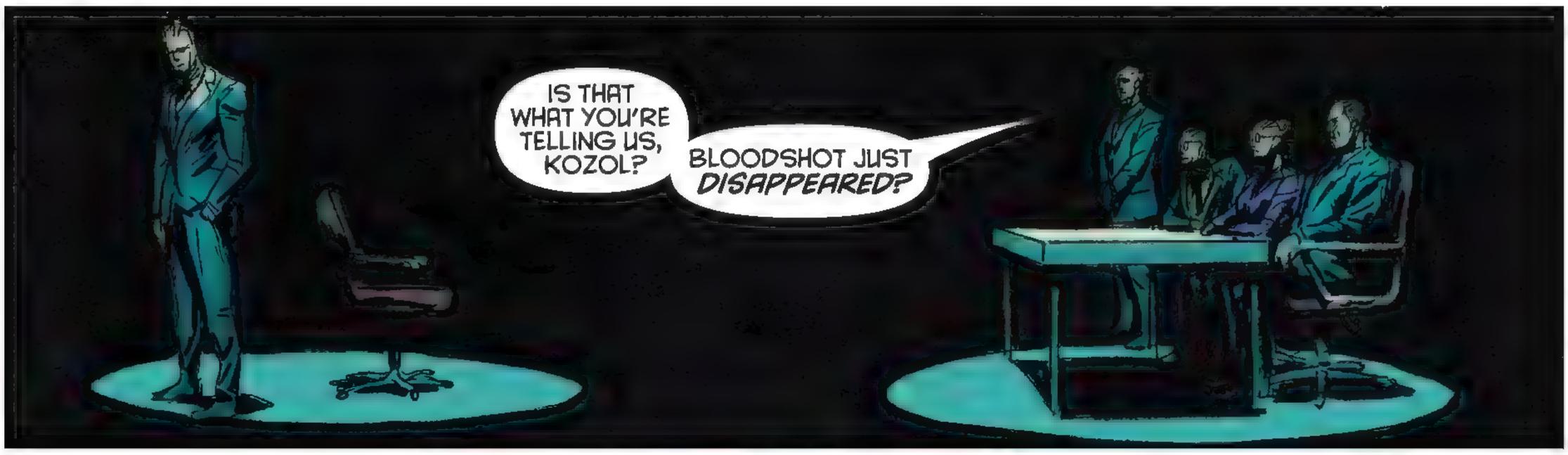
I'LL STAY BEHIND.

I'LL COVER YOU.
JUST DISAPPEAR.
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

"CONFUSED AS THEY ARE RIGHT NOW, THEY'RE MY TEAMMATES.
"I HAVE TO BELIEVE THEY'LL EVENTUALLY ACCEPT THE TRUTH."

THEY'LL KILL YOU.
I'M ALREADY DYING ANYWAY, RIGHT?

NOW GET OUT OF HERE!
GO!


IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE TELLING US, KOZOL?
BLOODSHOT JUST DISAPPEARED?

A MULTI-BILLION-DOLLAR PROPERTY. AN UTTERLY UNIQUE PIECE OF NANOTECH OUR COMPETITORS WOULD KILL TO LAY THEIR HANDS ON. AND YOU LET HIM STROLL OFF INTO THE DESERT.
TRULY UNFORGIVABLE.

THAT'S UNFORGIVABLE? HOW ABOUT THE STATE OF THIS COMPANY WHEN I TOOK OVER?!
IT WAS A JOKE. AND NOWHERE WAS THAT MORE EVIDENT THAN IN THAT LAUGHABLE BATCH OF RECRUITS I WAS GIVEN TO REBUILD H.A.R.D. CORPS.

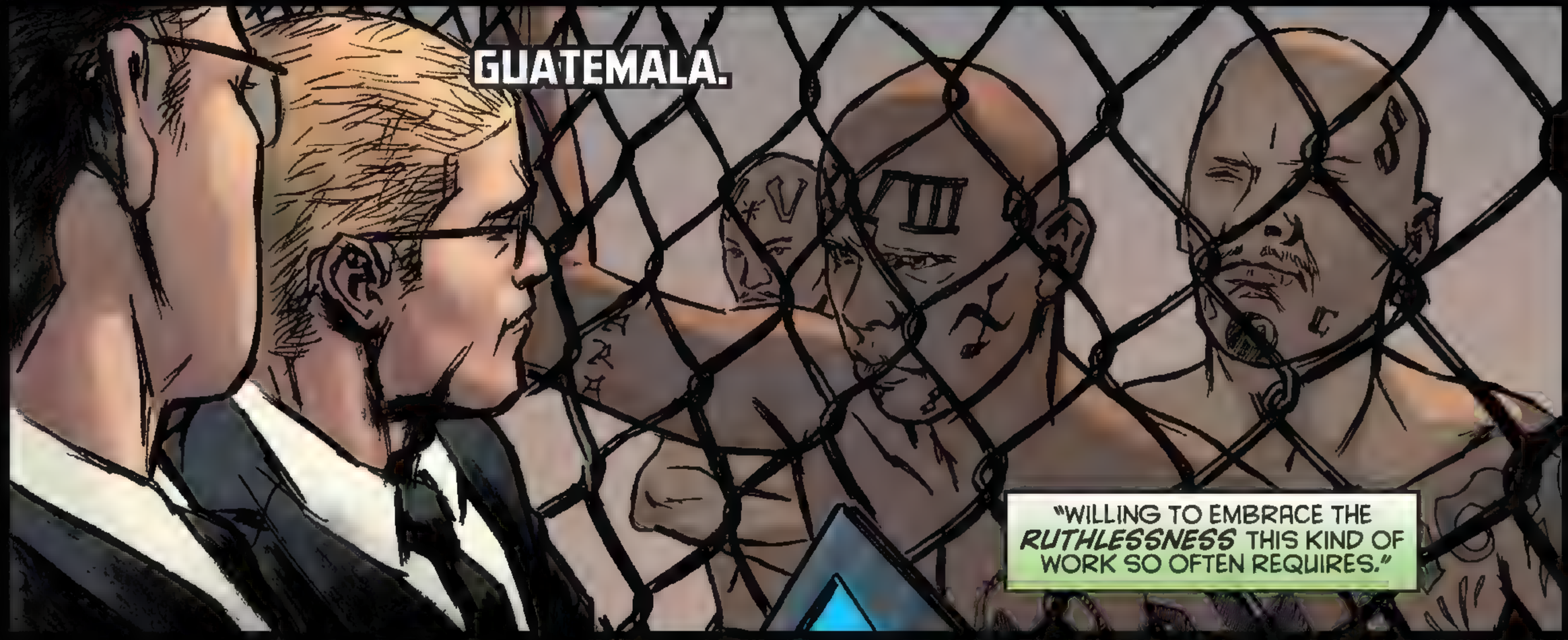
A DRUNK, A CRIPPLE, A COMPLETE MORON...
...WITH THAT LINEUP, THE ONLY REAL SURPRISE IS WE KEPT BLOODSHOT AROUND AS LONG AS WE DID!

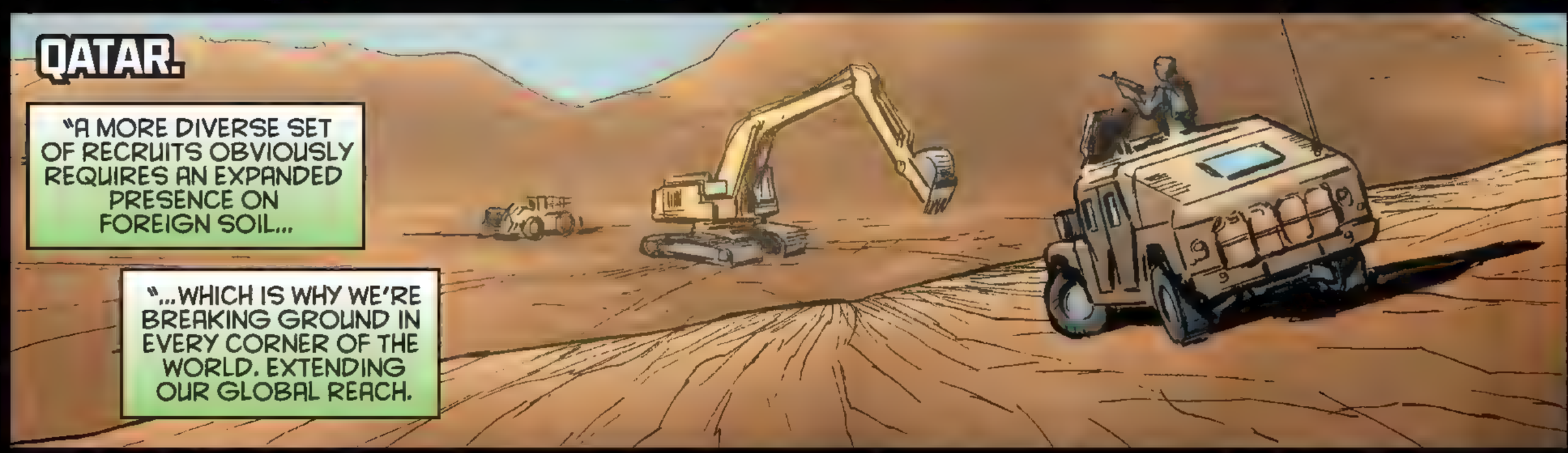
I CAN GUARANTEE BLOODSHOT'S ABSENCE FROM THE COMPANY WILL BE TEMPORARY.
HIS DESERTION, AS CRITICAL AS IT SEEMS NOW, IS NOTHING BUT A BUMP IN THE ROAD.
IN FACT, IT WON'T HAVE ANY BEARING AT ALL ON P.R.S.'S NEW TRAJECTORY, ON THE RESTRUCTURING THAT'S ALREADY UNDERWAY...

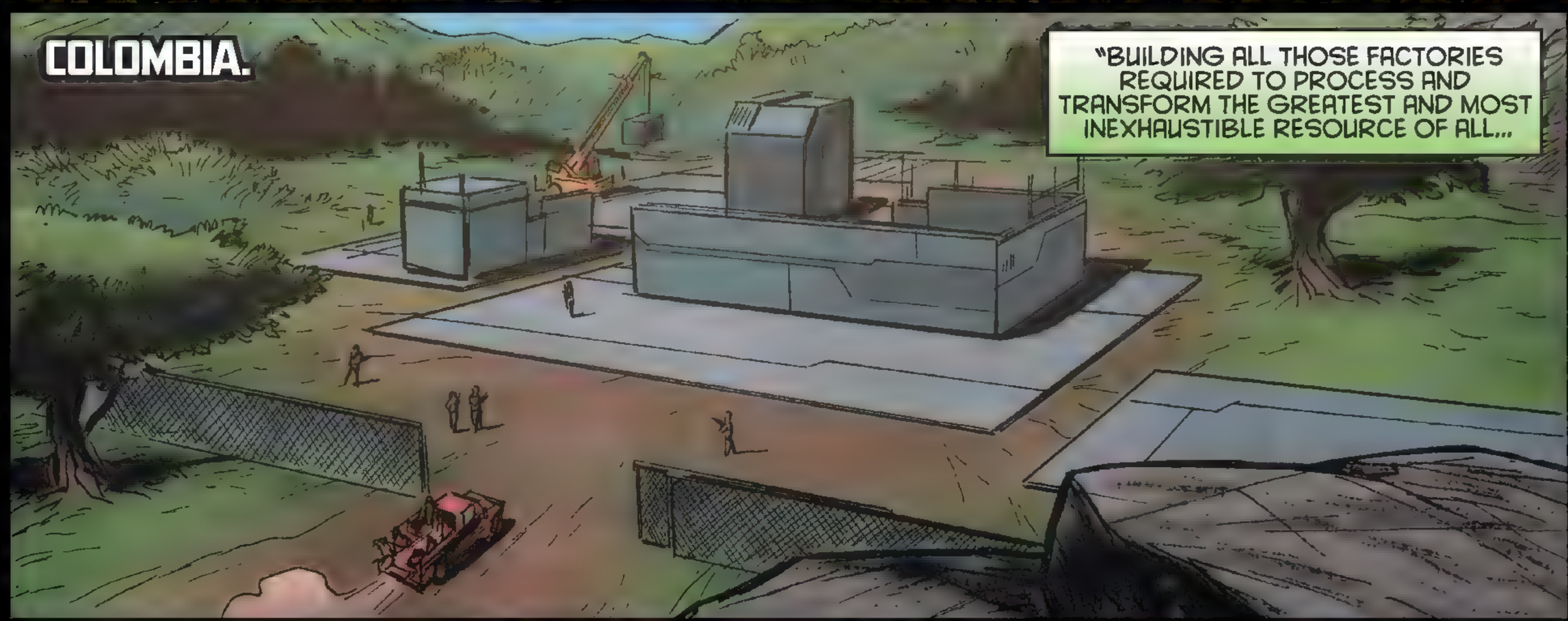
"THE WORLD IS *LOUSY* WITH SUPER-POWERED *PSIOTS*. WE KNOW THAT NOW. AND THE WORLD WILL *PAY* FOR A *HUMAN* ARMY TO GUARD AGAINST THEM.
"I'M NOW PERSONALLY OVERSEEING ALL H.A.R.D. CORPS *RECRUITING*.
"IF WE'VE LEARNED ANYTHING FROM PAST MISTAKES, IT'S THAT THE RAW MATERIAL'S BEEN TOO *SOFT*.

BRAZIL.
"WE NEED TO DRAW FROM A POOL OF *STERNER* STUFF.
"MEN AND WOMEN CONSIDERABLY LESS COMFORTABLE THAN YOUR AVERAGE AMERICAN TAXPAYER.

INDONESIA.
"MORE ACCUSTOMED TO STRUGGLE.


GUATEMALA.
"WILLING TO EMBRACE THE *RUTHLESSNESS* THIS KIND OF WORK SO OFTEN REQUIRES."


QATAR.
"A MORE DIVERSE SET OF RECRUITS OBVIOUSLY REQUIRES AN EXPANDED PRESENCE ON FOREIGN SOIL...
"...WHICH IS WHY WE'RE BREAKING GROUND IN EVERY CORNER OF THE WORLD. EXTENDING OUR GLOBAL REACH.


COLOMBIA.
"BUILDING ALL THOSE FACTORIES REQUIRED TO PROCESS AND TRANSFORM THE GREATEST AND MOST INEXHAUSTIBLE RESOURCE OF ALL...

"...DESPERATE AND ANGRY *HUMANITY.*"

THIS PROCESS WILL OBVIOUSLY TAKE SOME TIME.
BUT THE RESULT WILL BE THE FORCE WE'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF...
...AN ALL-NEW H.A.R.D. CORPS--MASSIVE, FIERCE, EACH MEMBER ENTIRELY EXPENDABLE, EASILY AND CHEAPLY REPLACED.
THEN WE CAN FINALLY FREE OURSELVES FROM RELIANCE ON BLOODSHOT, KIDNAPPED PSIOTS, AND THE LIKE. ALL THOSE INTRACTABLE MONSTERS WHOSE WHIMS HAVE COST US SO MUCH MONEY AND MEN.

"AS FAR AS THE CURRENT H.A.R.D. CORPS TEAM GOES, I HAVEN'T DECIDED WHAT TO DO WITH THEM YET.

"THEY'RE A PATHETIC BUNCH RIGHT NOW.

"MAYBE I'LL USE THEM TO TRAIN THE NEW RECRUITS.

"BUT FIRST I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT IF ANY OF THEM HELPED FLATLINE.

"THAT'S THE ONLY REASON I'M KEEPING HER ALIVE-- TO SEE IF SHE'LL TALK.

"I DOUBT SHE KNOWS ANYTHING OF BLOODSHOT'S WHEREABOUTS.

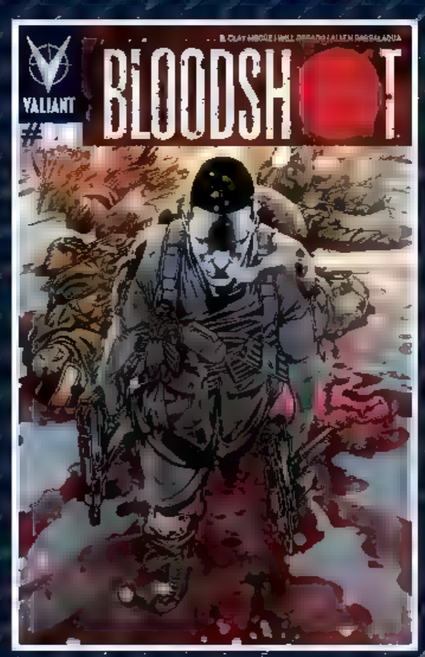
"BUT LIKE I SAID, IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE WE TRACK HIM DOWN.

"THERE ARE ONLY SO MANY PLACES HE CAN RUN...

"...AND WHO THE HELL WOULD BE CRAZY ENOUGH TO TAKE HIM IN?"

YOU ARE NOW LEAVING NEVADA

THE GLITCH AND OTHER TALES



VALIANT
#24
B. CLAY MOORE | WILL ROSADO | ALLEN PASSALAQUA
BLOODSHOT

KIEV, UKRAINE.
2000 A.D.

HELLO, POLICE?

NO. THERE'S NOTHING WRONG. I WAS JUST CHECKING TO SEE IF THE PHONE LINES WERE STILL WORKING. I SUPPOSE I MUST BE ONE OF THE FIRST TO AWAKEN.

EXCUSE ME? HELLO? SIR?

THAT WAS ODD. THE MAN SEEMED SURPRISED THAT THE PHONES--

-GURK-

ACK!
HEY--
HEY,
ST--

BLAM

BLAM

POLICE
BLAM BLAM BLAM

SIMFEROPOL.
THE CRIMEAN PENINSULA.
Телевізійна стан

AGAIN--WE REPEAT--
THE STATE IS IN CONTROL
OF THE SITUATION. ALL WILL
BE EXPLAINED SHORTLY. FOR
NOW--WE INSIST THAT YOU
STAY INSIDE YOUR HOMES
OR AT YOUR PLACES
OF BUSINESS.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF CONFRONTED WITH VIOLENCE, DO NOT RESIST. ONLY THOSE IMPEDING THE PROGRESS OF THE STATE WILL FIND THEMSELVES IN HARM'S WAY.

NO REPORTS OF ANYTHING BEYOND THE UKRAINE?

NO. BUT NO INTERFERENCE FROM MOSCOW, EITHER. WE'RE HOURS INTO *THE AWAKENING* AND THINGS HERE ARE PROCEEDING APPROPRIATELY.

AND THE PORTS? SEVASTOPOL?

"NOTHING IS COMING IN OR LEAVING WITHOUT OUR KNOWLEDGE."

STAND DOWN?! ON WHOSE ORDERS, EXACTLY?

THIS MAKES NO SENSE. NONE AT ALL.

STEP DOWN AND WE'LL BE GLAD TO DISCUSS THIS RATIONALLY, CAPTAIN.

BBLRRBLLE

?
GAH!
SNAPP
IT'S A LONG SWIM FROM GEORGIA TO THE CRIMEAN PENINSULA. THE SOONER I'M OUT OF THE WATER THE BETTER.

CAN'T SAY CHANGING UNDERWATER IS THE EASIEST THING I'VE DONE, BUT *HE* WON'T BE NEEDING ANY OF THIS AGAIN.
COMBINED WITH THE UNIFORM, FACIAL NANO-RECONFIGURATION SHOULD GET ME SAFELY TOPSIDE.
GOOD THING I CAUGHT HIM BY SURPRISE. FROM HIS GRIP I COULD TELL HIS STRENGTH WAS AMPED UP BY SOMETHING.
MARAT! WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
I DON'T KNOW--HE FELL IN?
I-I MUST HAVE SLIPPED.
THE POWER SURGES FROM THESE MEN IN WAVES. IT'S LIKE THEY'RE CRACKLING WITH JUICE.
TAKE MY HAND, BROTHER.
I-- THANK YOU.
THE NANITES IN MY SYSTEM CAN SENSE SOME SORT OF ELECTRONICS AT WORK WITHIN THESE SOLDIERS--
--BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO FIND A WAY IN TO HACK IT--
UNGH. SOMETHING-- IN MY HEAD.
IT-- THAT'S-- THAT'S NOT MARAT.

PROJECT RISING SPIRIT
RESEARCH FACILITY KAPPA.
COLORADO.

SO MUCH FOR PLAN A.

THAT'S ALL RIGHT. AT LEAST WE KNOW THEY'RE PARTIALLY IMMUNE TO YOUR NANITES.

INTERESTING. NORMALLY *BLOODSHOT* IS ABLE TO CONTROL VIRTUALLY ANYTHING THAT OPERATES ELECTRONICALLY. IT PROBABLY BEHOOVES US TO DO MORE DIRECT TESTING ON THE NANITES' INTERACTION WITH OUTMODED TECHNOLOGY.

CAN WE UNDERSCORE THAT BLOODSHOT NEEDS TO CONTINUE HIS MISSION, USING WHATEVER VIOLENCE IS AT HIS DISPOSAL, MAJOR?

SO LONG AS WE TRACK EVERYTHING. BLOODSHOT FREQUENTLY ACTS AS OUR BATTERING RAM. HERE HE NEEDS TO BE A SCALPEL.

OUR CONTRACT WITH YOU EXTENDS BEYOND *OBSERVATION,* DOCTOR. YOU'RE HERE TO HELP US FIGURE THIS THING OUT.

DO WHAT YOU CAN TO TRACE THE INSURGENTS' ACTIVITY, OKAY, PAL? THERE HAS TO BE AN ANSWER OUT THERE SOMEWHERE.

I'LL DO MY BEST, SIR.

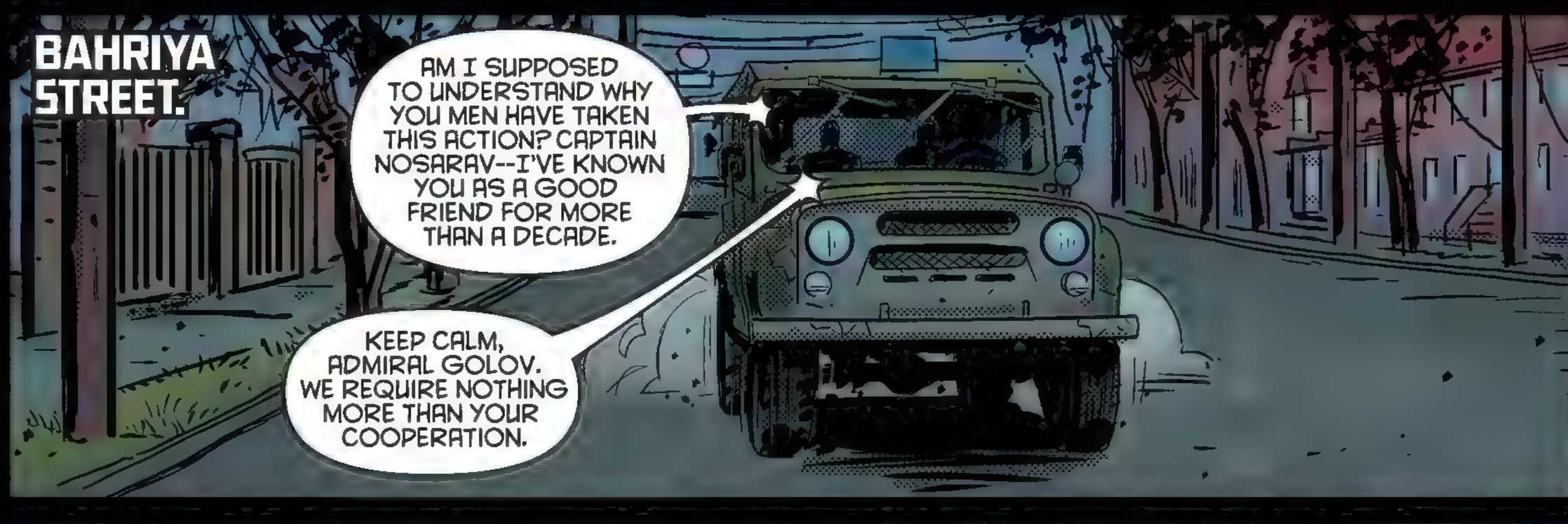
SHOOT HIM!

UNH—!

URK--
DON'T HAVE TIME TO PLAY.
KAKK KAKK KAKK KAKK KAKK
KAKK KAKK KAKK KAKK
FIRST STEP IN PLAN B IS TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.
KAKK KAKK KAKK KAKK
I NEED TO MAKE MY WAY TO WHATEVER CENTRAL COMMAND THEY'VE SET UP. SEE EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF ODDS I'M UP AGAINST.
A CHUNK OF THE POPULATION WAKES UP ONE MORNING AND STARTS MURDERING CITIZENS. STILL NOT SURE WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE, BUT THE MILITARY SEEMS TO BE INVOLVED. OR AT LEAST SOME OF THE MILITARY. BUT THERE'S SOME SORT OF BIO-ELECTRIC ELEMENT AT PLAY--
SIGNALING ALL SLEEPERS--CONVERGE ON ENEMY ACTIVITY IN SEVASTOPOL. WE ARE TRANSPORTING ADMIRAL GOLOV OUT OF SEVASTOPOL VIA BAHRIYA.

WHAT'S THIS? ACCORDING TO THE BRIEFING, GOLOV IS THE COMMANDER OF THE BLACK SEA FLEET.
WE AGREE IT WOULD BE TO OUR ADVANTAGE TO BROADCAST HIS CAPTIVITY.

SIR, YOU COPYING THIS?
LOUD AND CLEAR. SEEMS LIKE YOUR BEST BET TO STRIKE AT THE HEART OF WHATEVER'S GOING ON.


BAHRIYA STREET.
AM I SUPPOSED TO UNDERSTAND WHY YOU MEN HAVE TAKEN THIS ACTION? CAPTAIN NOSARAV--I'VE KNOWN YOU AS A GOOD FRIEND FOR MORE THAN A DECADE.
KEEP CALM, ADMIRAL GOLOV. WE REQUIRE NOTHING MORE THAN YOUR COOPERATION.

I ASSURE YOU THAT WE'RE MORE THAN A SIMPLE *CABAL,* ADMIRAL. FOR THE RESTORATION OF ORDER, YOU'LL AGREE THINGS MUST RUN DEEPER THAN THAT. YOUR REJECTION OF THE STATE--

CAPTAIN!!

UUNNH.
YOU'RE NOT TAKING ANYONE ANYWHERE, SOLDIER.
BLAM
THE SLEEPERS-- THEIR BRAINS--
--DO YOU GUYS SEE WHAT I'M SEEING?

NOW WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHERE.
TAKE A CLOSER LOOK. WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DEALING WITH.

ALL RIGHT. CHECKING IT OUT NOW.
OKAY. SOME KIND OF ORGANIC ELECTRICAL GRID? BUT HEAVY-HANDED, OLD SCHOOL STUFF. NO WONDER MY NANITES COULDN'T CONNECT WITH IT. IT WOULD BE LIKE A MAC TRYING TO COMMUNICATE WITH A COMMODORE 64.

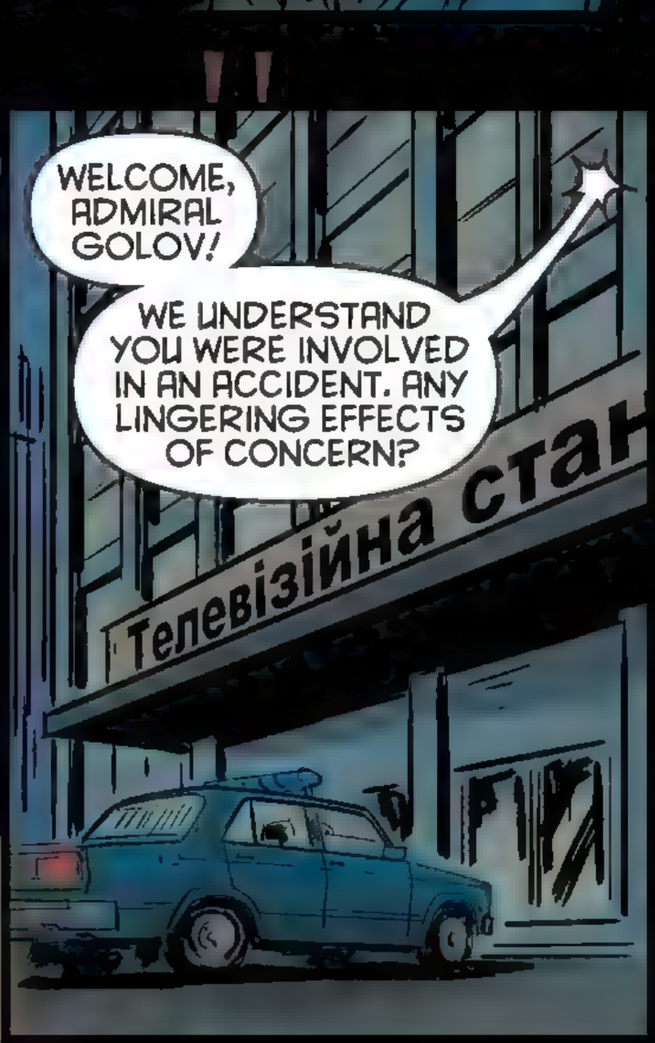
THERE'S REALLY NOTHING HE WON'T DO, IS THERE?
THAT'S THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF THE NEURAL CONDITIONING, DOCTOR. THE NANITES IN HIS BLOOD MAKE HIM A REMARKABLY UNIQUE KILLING MACHINE--BUT IT'S HIS BELIEF THAT HE'S SERVING A GREATER GOOD THAT PUSHES HIM PAST ANY BOUNDARIES THAT MIGHT STOP A NORMAL MAN. HE IS WHAT WE TELL HIM HE IS.
LOOKS LIKE THE ADMIRAL WAS COLLATERAL DAMAGE, BUT HIS DEATH GIVES ME A GOOD COVER. I WOULD IMAGINE A FENDER-BENDER WON'T GET IN THE WAY OF THEM BRINGING HIM IN.

SEEMS LIKE HALF THE COUNTRY'S BEEN INFECTED WITH THIS--VIRUS. SHOULDN'T BE TOO LONG BEFORE SOMEONE--

YOU THERE!

ADMIRAL GOLOV? IT WAS REPORTED YOU WERE BEING TRANSPORTED TO SEVASTOPOL.
UH-- THERE WAS A COLLISION--
IT DOESN'T MATTER. GET IN THE CAR. I'LL TAKE YOU MYSELF.

FORGIVE MY IGNORANCE, BUT--YOUR PARTNER?
MY PARTNER WASN'T GIVEN THE GIFT OF CLARITY THAT THE STATE PROVIDED MANY YEARS AGO.

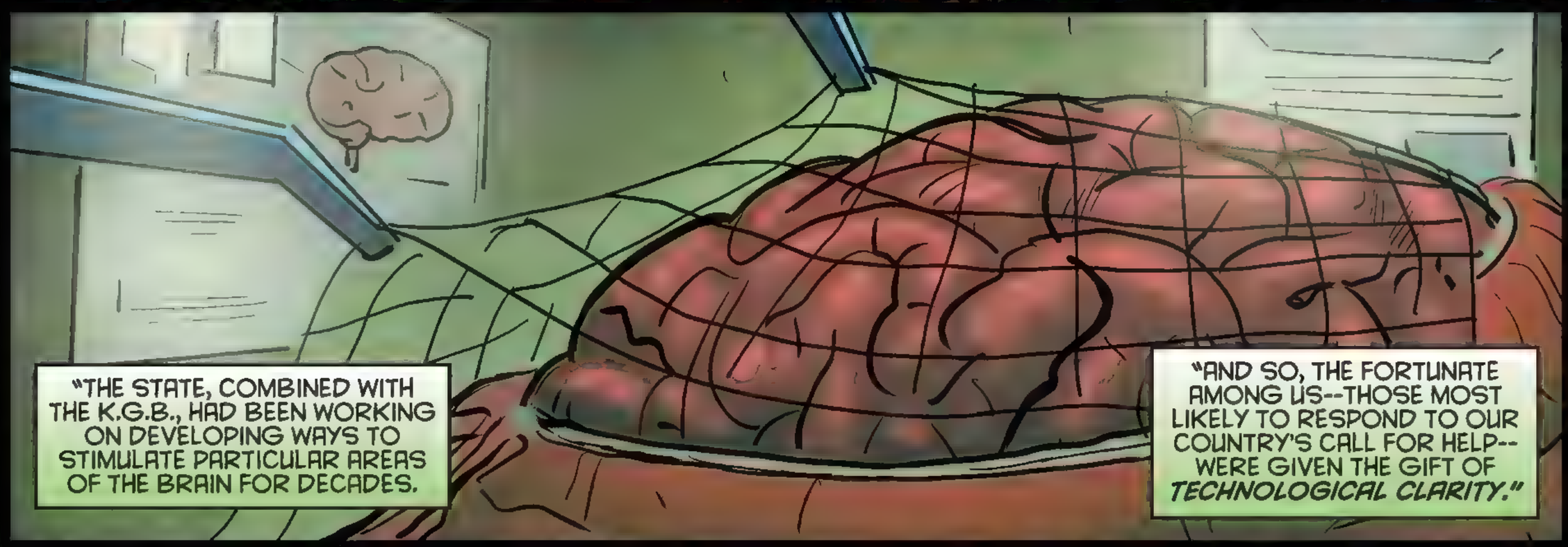

WELCOME, ADMIRAL GOLOV!
WE UNDERSTAND YOU WERE INVOLVED IN AN ACCIDENT. ANY LINGERING EFFECTS OF CONCERN?
Телевізійна стан

I'M AS FINE AS CAN BE EXPECTED, I SUPPOSE. CONSIDERING A GROUP OF BRAINWASHED LAPSED COMMUNISTS HAVE TAKEN OVER THE COUNTRY.
I DON'T RECALL YOU HAVING SUCH A DRY SENSE OF HUMOR, ADMIRAL GOLOV.

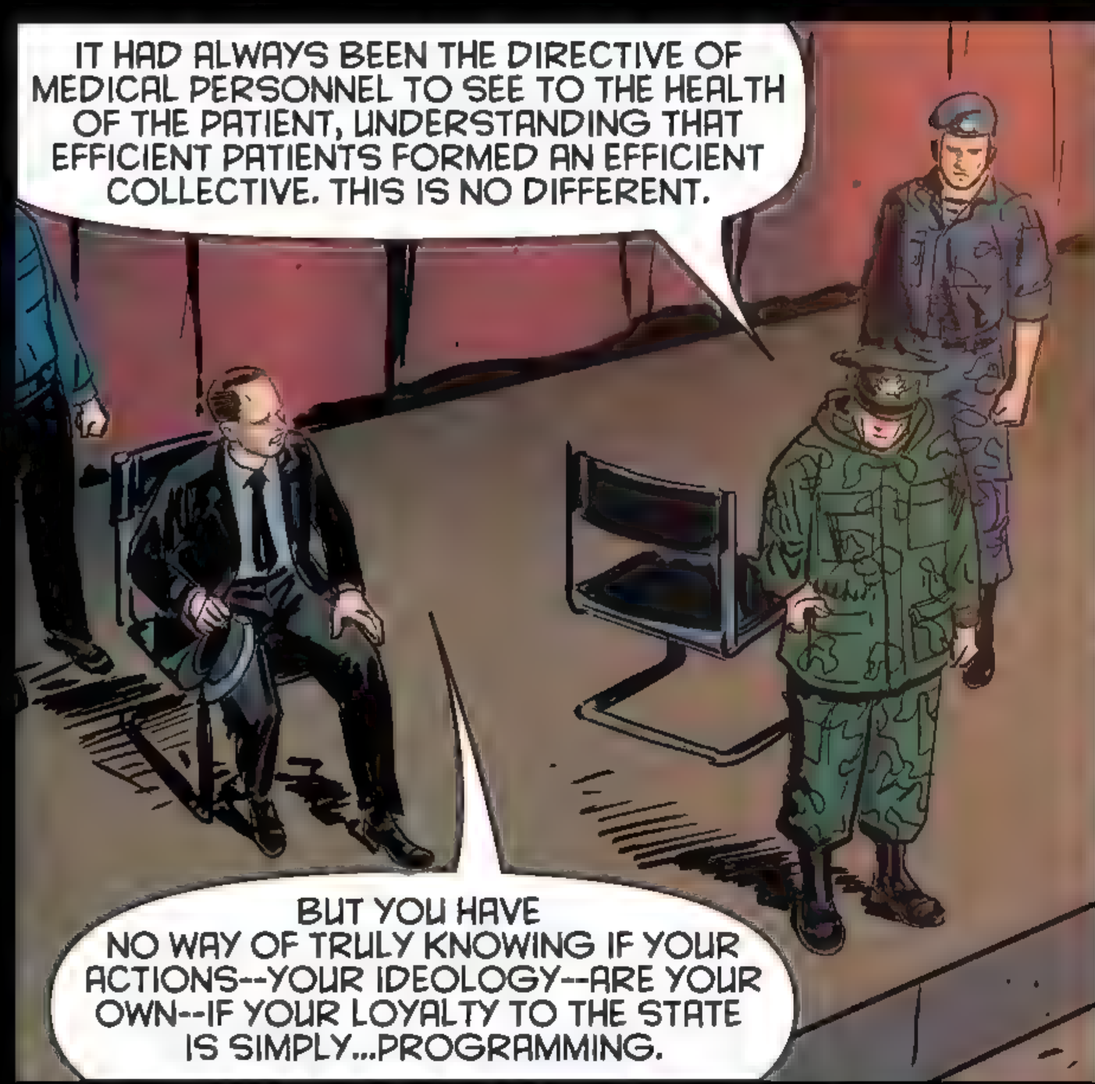
LET ME TELL YOU A STORY, ADMIRAL. I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND EXACTLY WHAT IS HAPPENING, AND WHAT WILL SOON BE HAPPENING ACROSS THE REGION.

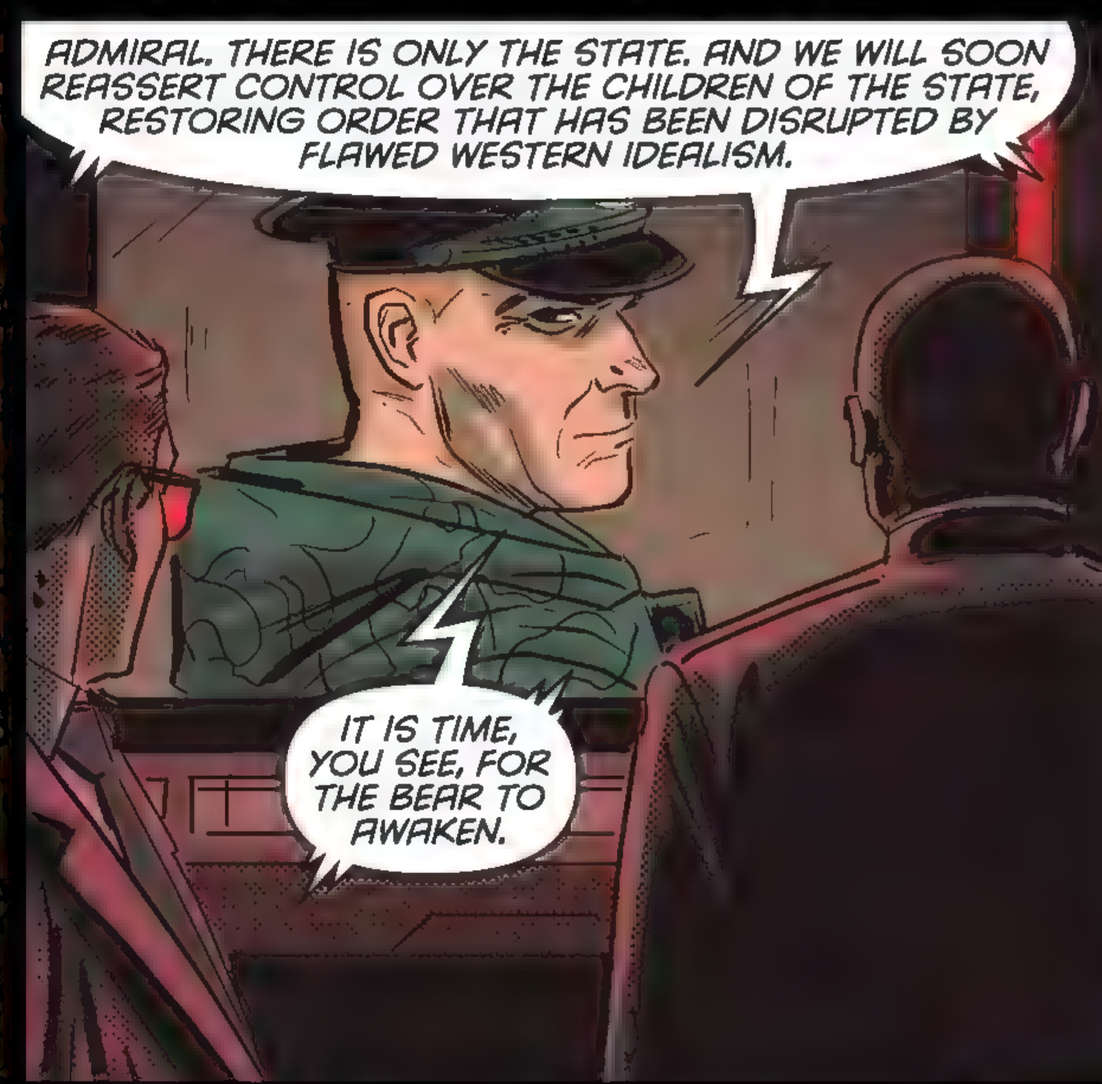
AT THE END OF WHAT WE REFER TO AS THE COLD WAR, THE PARTY SAW THE COLLAPSE COMING.
ONCE GORBACHEV HAD LET THE GENIE OUT OF THE BOTTLE, THERE WAS NO TURNING BACK.
I--I REMEMBER THIS, OF COURSE.

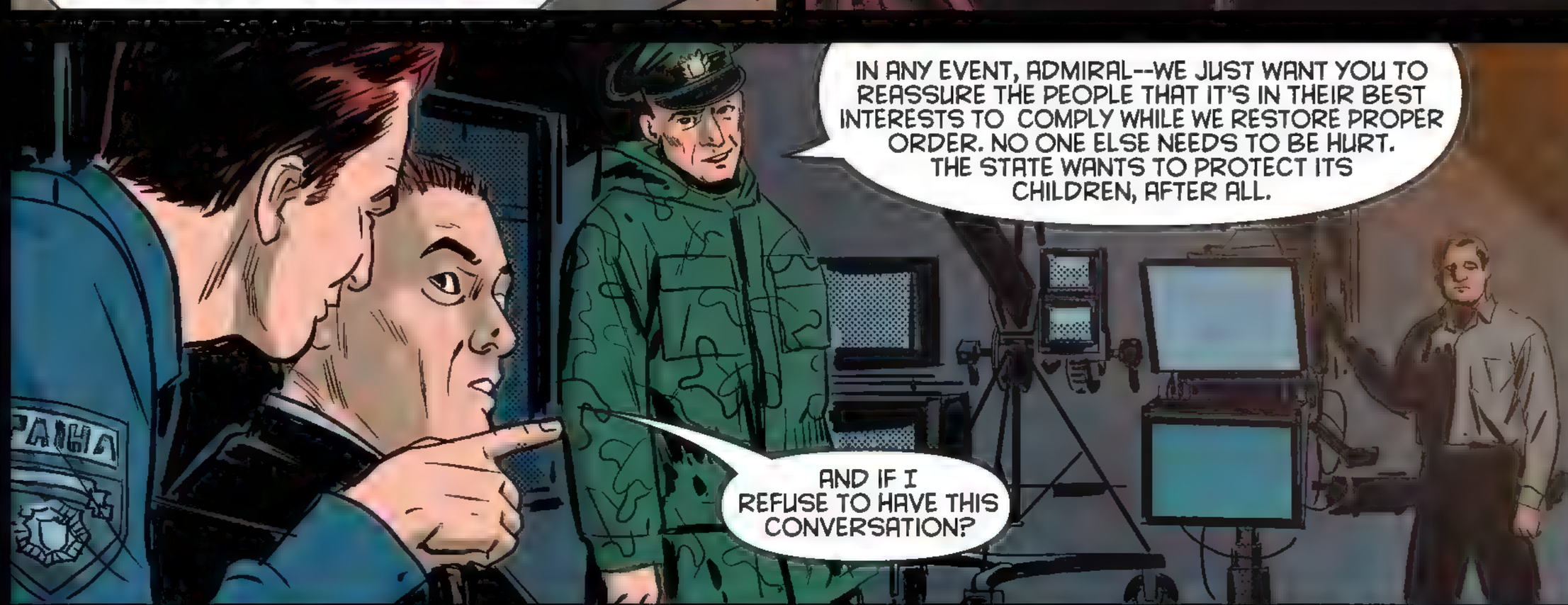
"MANY WITHIN THE PARTY UNDERSTOOD THAT THE BEAR WOULD HIBERNATE, BUT ALSO ASSURED THAT THE BEAR WOULD AWAKEN AGAIN ONE DAY.


"THE STATE, COMBINED WITH THE K.G.B., HAD BEEN WORKING ON DEVELOPING WAYS TO STIMULATE PARTICULAR AREAS OF THE BRAIN FOR DECADES.
"AND SO, THE FORTUNATE AMONG US--THOSE MOST LIKELY TO RESPOND TO OUR COUNTRY'S CALL FOR HELP--WERE GIVEN THE GIFT OF *TECHNOLOGICAL CLARITY.*"

CLARITY? YOU ALLOWED YOURSELVES TO BE IMPLANTED WITH--WHAT--MIND-CONTROLLING HARDWARE--?
PLEASE, ADMIRAL.


IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN THE DIRECTIVE OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL TO SEE TO THE HEALTH OF THE PATIENT, UNDERSTANDING THAT EFFICIENT PATIENTS FORMED AN EFFICIENT COLLECTIVE. THIS IS NO DIFFERENT.
BUT YOU HAVE NO WAY OF TRULY KNOWING IF YOUR ACTIONS--YOUR IDEOLOGY--ARE YOUR OWN--IF YOUR LOYALTY TO THE STATE IS SIMPLY...PROGRAMMING.


ADMIRAL. THERE IS ONLY THE STATE. AND WE WILL SOON REASSERT CONTROL OVER THE CHILDREN OF THE STATE, RESTORING ORDER THAT HAS BEEN DISRUPTED BY FLAWED WESTERN IDEALISM.
IT IS TIME, YOU SEE, FOR THE BEAR TO AWAKEN.

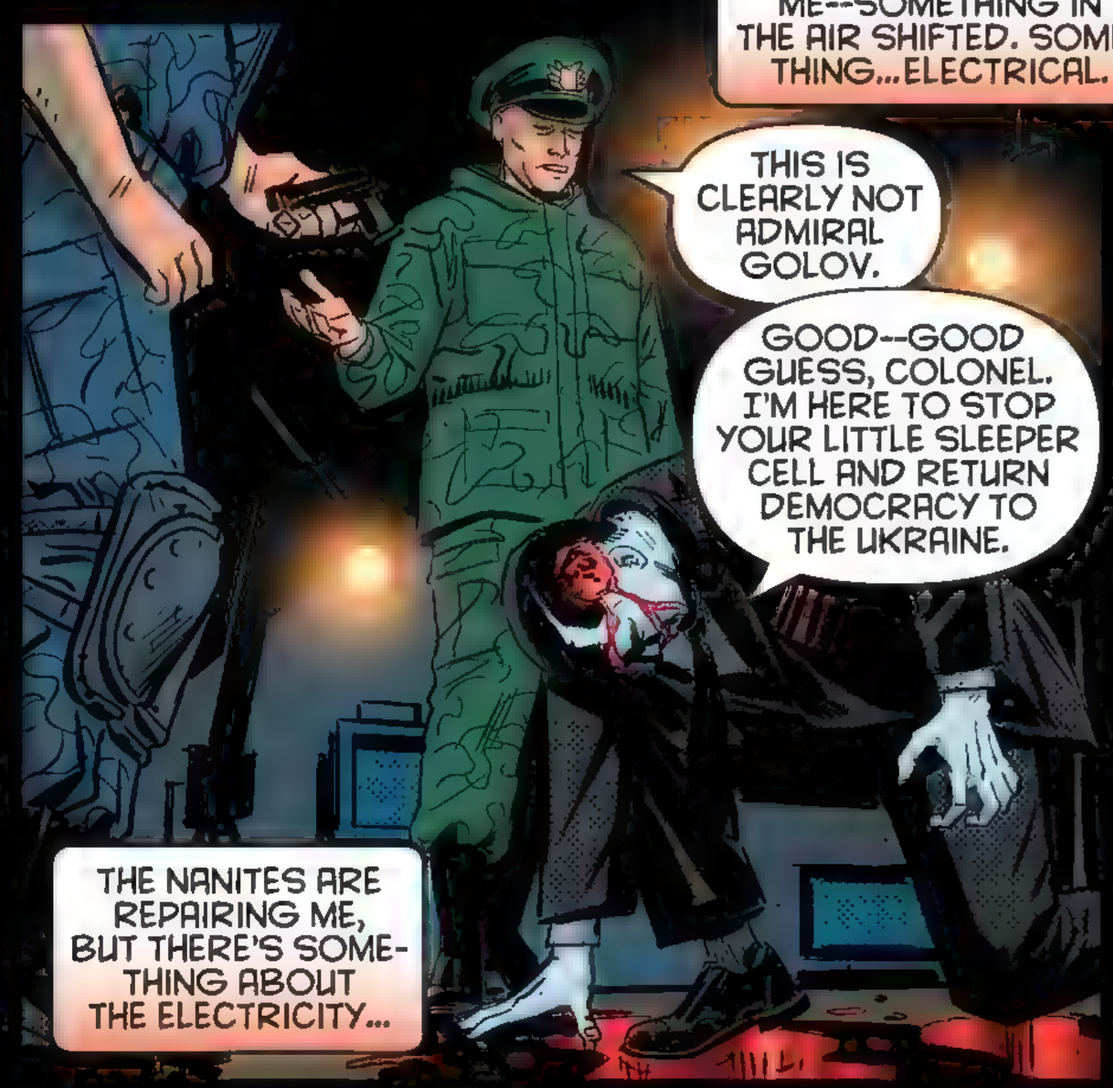

IN ANY EVENT, ADMIRAL--WE JUST WANT YOU TO REASSURE THE PEOPLE THAT IT'S IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS TO COMPLY WHILE WE RESTORE PROPER ORDER. NO ONE ELSE NEEDS TO BE HURT. THE STATE WANTS TO PROTECT ITS CHILDREN, AFTER ALL.
AND IF I REFUSE TO HAVE THIS CONVERSATION?

PLEASE, ADMIRAL. WE BOTH KNOW YOU'RE SMARTER THAN THAT.
I SUPPOSE SO, YES.
I'M SURE I COULD TAKE THESE FOUR DOWN, CAMERAS ROLLING OR NOT. BUT THERE HAS TO BE A WAY TO MAKE A BIGGER IMPACT THAN HAND-FIGHTING A FEW COMMUNISTS.
WE'RE ON, SIR.

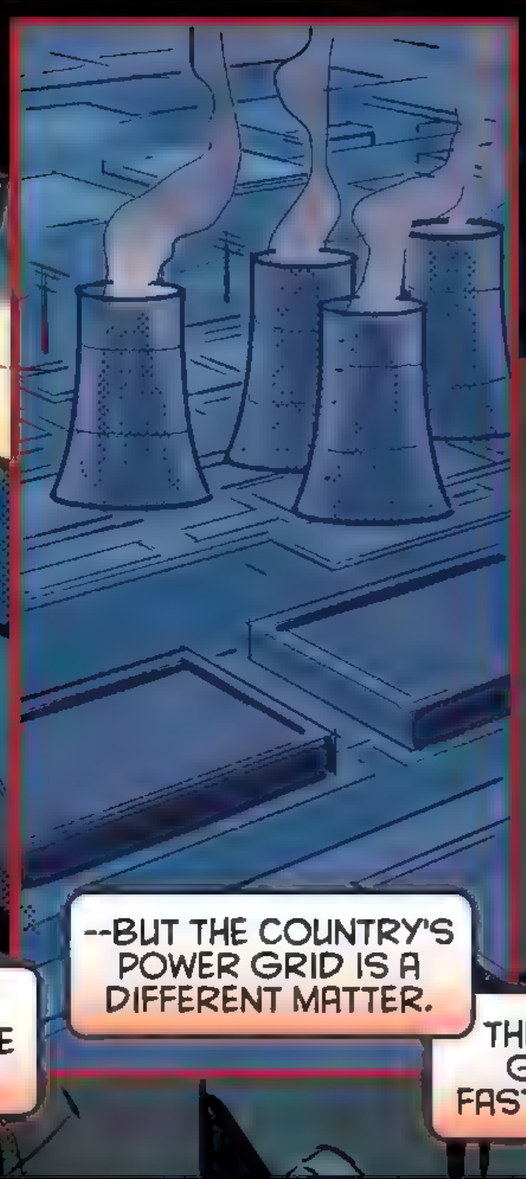
GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE. WE COME TO YOU LIVE FROM SIMFEROPOL, WITH ADMIRAL IVAN GOLOV, THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE BLACK SEA FLEET. THE FLEET IS NOW UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE STATE. ISN'T THAT CORRECT, ADMIRAL?
SO YOU SAY, COLONEL--

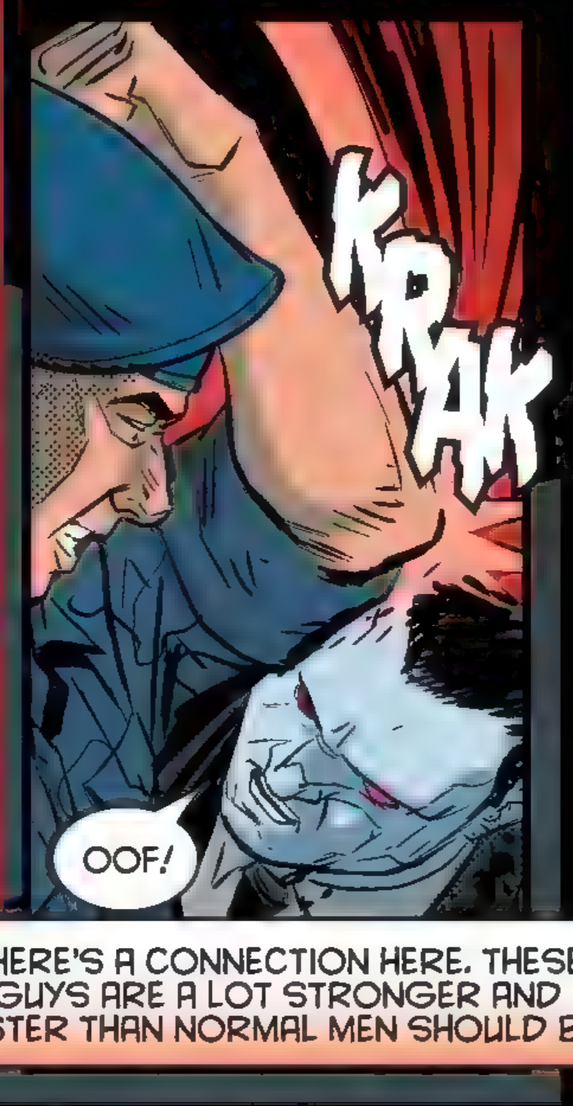
BLAM
WE'D LIKE TO THANK THE ADMIRAL FOR HIS COOPERATION, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, THE STATE NO LONGER NEEDS HIS SERVICES. LET THIS BE--
COLONEL--!
JESUS CHRIST.
YEAH. WOW. VICIOUS BASTARDS.
WHAT-- WHAT IN THE WORLD?
OKAY--DIDN'T... SEE THAT COMING. SO MUCH FOR MY COVER. C'MON, NANITES-- HELP ME OUT HERE...
BLOODSHOT! YOU HAVE TO FIGHT THROUGH THIS. AT THE MOMENT YOU'RE THE BEST HOPE TO RESTORE SANITY IN THE REGION. IF--
I KNOW. I KNOW! LET ME... PULL MYSELF TOGETH--

STAY DOWN, WHATEVER YOU ARE.
OOF.


WAIT--WHEN HE KICKED ME--SOMETHING IN THE AIR SHIFTED. SOMETHING...ELECTRICAL.
THIS IS CLEARLY NOT ADMIRAL GOLOV.
GOOD--GOOD GUESS, COLONEL. I'M HERE TO STOP YOUR LITTLE SLEEPER CELL AND RETURN DEMOCRACY TO THE UKRAINE.
THE NANITES ARE REPAIRING ME, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE ELECTRICITY...

WHA--
BLAM
WHO THE HELL IS HE? SUBDUE HIM!
EVERY SUDDEN MOVEMENT RESULTS IN A MINUTE FLUCTUATION IN THE STUDIO'S POWER.
THE NANITES MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CONNECT WITH THE SLEEPER'S BRAINS--


--BUT THE COUNTRY'S POWER GRID IS A DIFFERENT MATTER.


KRAK
OOF!
THERE'S A CONNECTION HERE. THESE GUYS ARE A LOT STRONGER AND FASTER THAN NORMAL MEN SHOULD BE.

KEEP HIM DOWN!
THE MORE ENERGY THEY EXERT, THE MORE THE GRID FLUCTUATES. IF I CAN...GET THE NANITES TO GO BEYOND REGISTERING THAT FLUCTUATION AND...INTERACT WITH THE GRID...

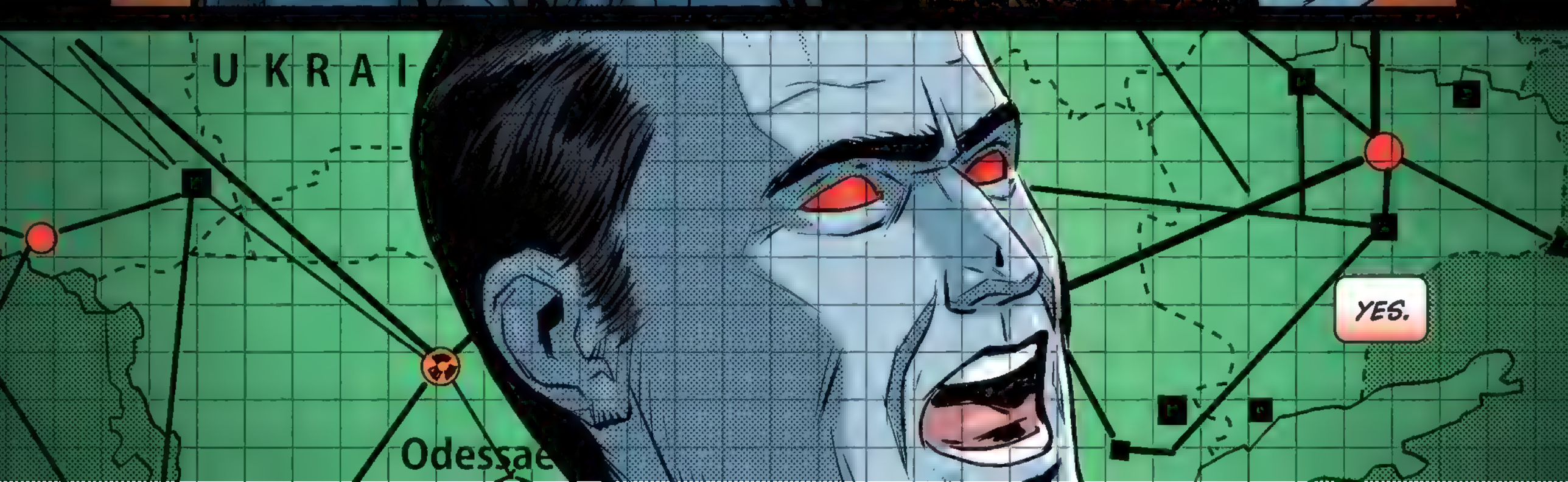
FATHER? WHAT'S HAPPENING?
EVIDENTLY OUR FATE IS BEING DETERMINED BY MADMEN, BORYS.

SNAP
OKAY. THAT'S ENOUGH OF THIS.
AAARH!

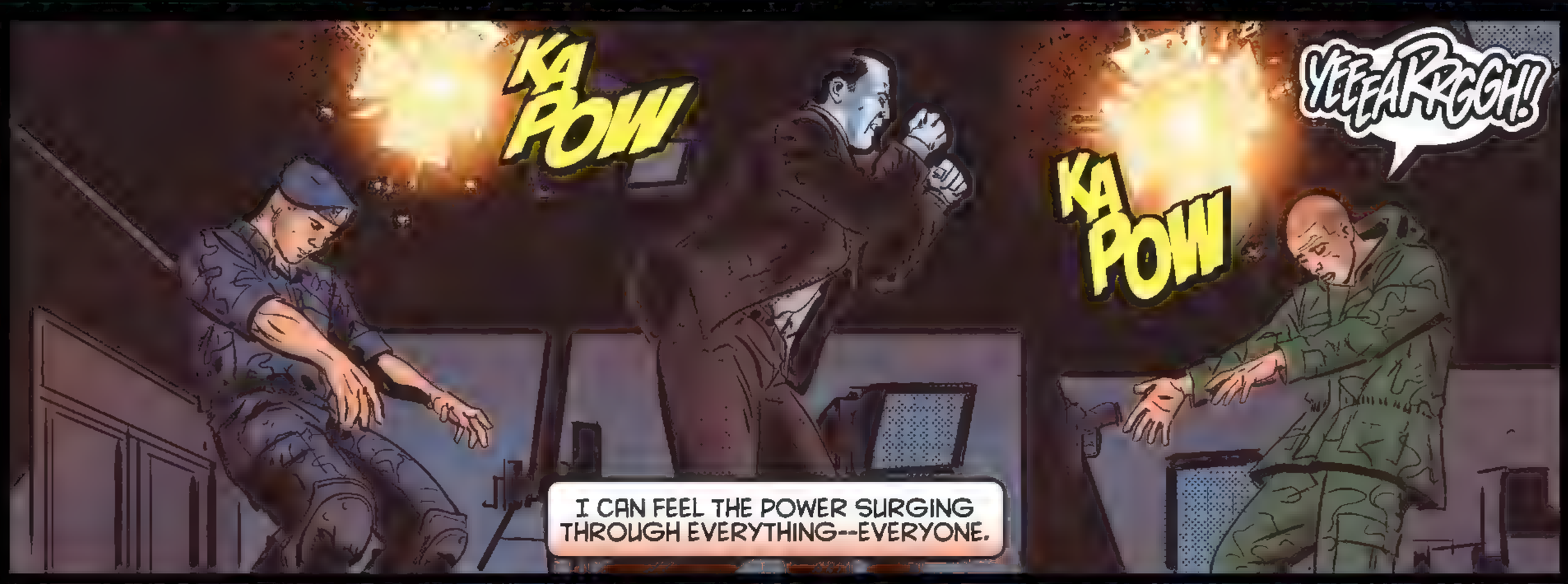
BLAM

BLAM BLAM
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT OR WHO YOU ARE, BUT I NO LONGER CARE.
UNH!
DAMN IT.
NEED TO REACH OUT--CONNECT WITH THE POWER SOURCES IN HERE BEFORE I'M SHOT TO PIECES.

BLAM
ACK!
COME ON--GET ME INTO THE MAINFRAME HERE--FIND THE GRID. EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED.


UKRAI
Odessae
YES.

WHAT'S--WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I'VE ACCESSED THE GRID--THE NETWORK COVERS THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. IF THESE MEN ARE LEECHING POWER FROM THE GRID, A MASSIVE SHORT CIRCUIT SHOULD SEND ENOUGH CURRENT THROUGH THEM TO HAVE SOME IMPACT.


KA POW
KA POW
YEEFARGGH!
I CAN FEEL THE POWER SURGING THROUGH EVERYTHING--EVERYONE.

WHAT--WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?
I'M SORRY, COLONEL--I GUESS THE WIRING IN YOUR BRAIN CAN ONLY HANDLE SO MUCH UNCONTROLLED CURRENT.

MY GOD--WHAT DID THEY DO TO ME? WHAT--WHAT HAVE I DONE?

IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT, COLONEL. YOU--YOU HAD NO CONTROL. YOU WERE PROGRAMMED TO BE THEIR WEAPON.
HEY! FOCUS ON THE TASK AT HAND! YOU'RE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET!

I--RIGHT. FOCUS ON--
PROGRAMMED. FOLLOWING SOMEONE ELSE'S COMMANDS WITHOUT QUESTION.

KRRASSSH
OH. DAMN.

JESUS CHRIST. THESE POOR BASTARDS. OBVIOUSLY THEY'VE BEEN PROGRAMMED TO ELIMINATE THE LARGEST THREAT. WHICH IS NOW ME.

I'M SORRY, PEOPLE. I AM. BUT THIS-- IS NECESSARY.

KRAKA KRAKA KRAKA KRAKA KRAKA KRAKA KRAKA KRAKA

WHY AM I SORRY? THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL ME--TAKE THE COUNTRY BY FORCE.

WHY--WHY IS THIS HAPPENING? WHERE DID MY CHILDREN GO? WHY IS-- MY HEAD...

MY GOD. WITH THE WIRING BURNING OUT, THEY'RE REVERTING BACK TO THEIR NORMAL SELVES. THE PEOPLE THEY WERE BEFORE THE PROGRAMMING KICKED IN.

CLEAN UP, BLOODSHOT!

KRAKA KRAKA KRAKA

BUT THERE'S--THERE'S NO HOPE FOR THEM. OR THE PEOPLE THEY WERE BEFORE.

WHO THEY WERE BEFORE...WHO I--

WHO-- WHO WAS I BEFORE?

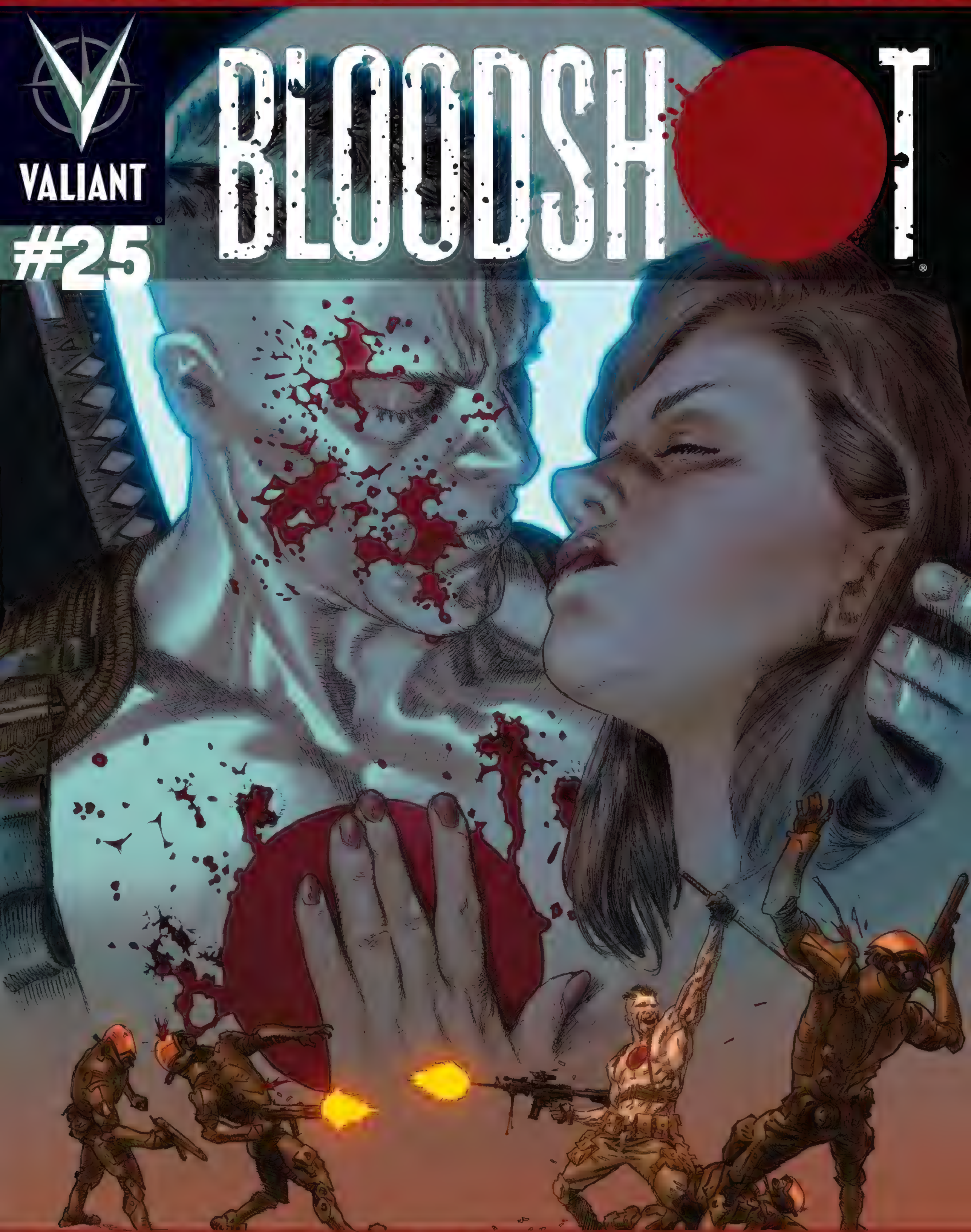
I GUESS YOU GUYS WILL WANT TO GET HIM UP AND OUT OF HERE A.S.A.P.
THERE IS NO "YOU GUYS," SOLDIER. OFFICIALLY THIS IS A U.N. MISSION, AND WE'RE ALL PLAYING TOGETHER. JUST CONSIDER US ANOTHER EFFECTIVE ARM AT THE WORLD'S DISPOSAL.

I'M NOT QUESTIONING ANYTHING, SIR. AND I DON'T NEED TO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR...ORGANIZATION. HOWEVER HE DID IT, HE DID IT, AND THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.
KUDOS ON DISPLAYING THE PROPER ATTITUDE, SON.

THIS IS GOING TO REQUIRE ONE HELL OF A COVER STORY.
NOT AS MUCH AS YOU THINK, DOCTOR. AS FAR AS THE U.N. IS CONCERNED, WE'RE CLEANING UP A MESS LEFT BEHIND BY K.G.B. OPERATIVES BEFORE THE WALL FELL. WE'VE GOT THE BLESSING OF THE WHOLE FREE WORLD, RUSSIA INCLUDED. MEDIA BLACKOUT ACROSS THE BOARD.
AND NO ONE'S QUESTIONING HOW THE SLEEPERS WERE TRIGGERED?
LET THEM QUESTION. WE'RE JUST LUCKY THAT A FEW OF THE PROJECT'S MASTERMINDS WASHED UP ON OUR DOORSTEP WHEN THE UKRAINE REGAINED INDEPENDENCE.
THAT LET US CONTROL THE PARAMETERS. FULLY MONITOR THE RESULTS. AT THE END, BLOODSHOT BARELY NEEDED TO BE COURSE-CORRECTED AT ALL.
WELL, THE RESULTS WERE HORRIFIC. BUT THE SLEEPERS PERFORMED UP TO TASK UNTIL BLOODSHOT'S INTERFERENCE.
THEIR ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE OF UKRAINIAN INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGH LIFE EXPERIENCE, COMBINED WITH THE TASKS IMPLANTED BY THE PREVIOUS REGIME BEFORE THEY FELL--THE RESULT WAS TOTAL DEVOTION TO REESTABLISHING STATE CONTROL.
ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, BLOODSHOT'S PERFORMANCE WAS REMARKABLE. HE DETECTED RELATIVELY MINOR FLUCTUATIONS IN ELECTRICAL PATTERNS AND DEDUCED THE IMPACT A POWER SURGE WOULD HAVE ON THE SLEEPERS. IF HE HADN'T MADE THAT CONNECTION, I DON'T KNOW WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.
WE WOULD HAVE DONE IT FOR HIM, DOCTOR. WE WENT INTO THIS OPERATION WITH EYES WIDE OPEN.
AH. OF COURSE.
AND, DOCTOR--
--YOUR CONCERNS WOULD BE BETTER LIMITED TO THE DATA, AND NOT THE POLITICS INVOLVED. CLEAR?

UH--YES. CRYSTAL CLEAR, MAJOR.
THANK YOU.
MOSCOW.
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THIS?
TRUTH BE TOLD, SIR--THE INTERFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN AGENT CUT SHORT OUR OBSERVATIONS. THE PEOPLE WERE TOO STUNNED BY THE FEROCITY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES TO CHOOSE SIDES OR ADOPT LOYALTIES.
AND WHAT OF THE DEEP SLEEPERS?
WELL, LET ME SAY THAT LEAKING THE EXISTENCE OF THE SLEEPER PROGRAM TO COVERT AMERICAN OPERATIVES AND ALLOWING THEM TO INITIATE THE ENTIRE AFFAIR--A STROKE OF GENIUS, SIR.
MM.
AS FAR AS THE AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED, THE SLEEPERS WERE ALL AWAKENED, AND ALL DEALT WITH. THEY HAVE NO INKLING THAT A DEEPER CABAL CAN BE TRIGGERED SEPARATELY.
WHEN THE TIME COMES TO RECLAIM CRIMEA, WE'LL HAVE ALL THE INTERNAL ASSISTANCE WE NEED.
"AS ALWAYS, COMPLETE, CONTINUED OBEDIENCE OF OUR OPERATIVES IS THE KEY TO EVERYTHING."

ANNIVERSARY THROWDOWN!

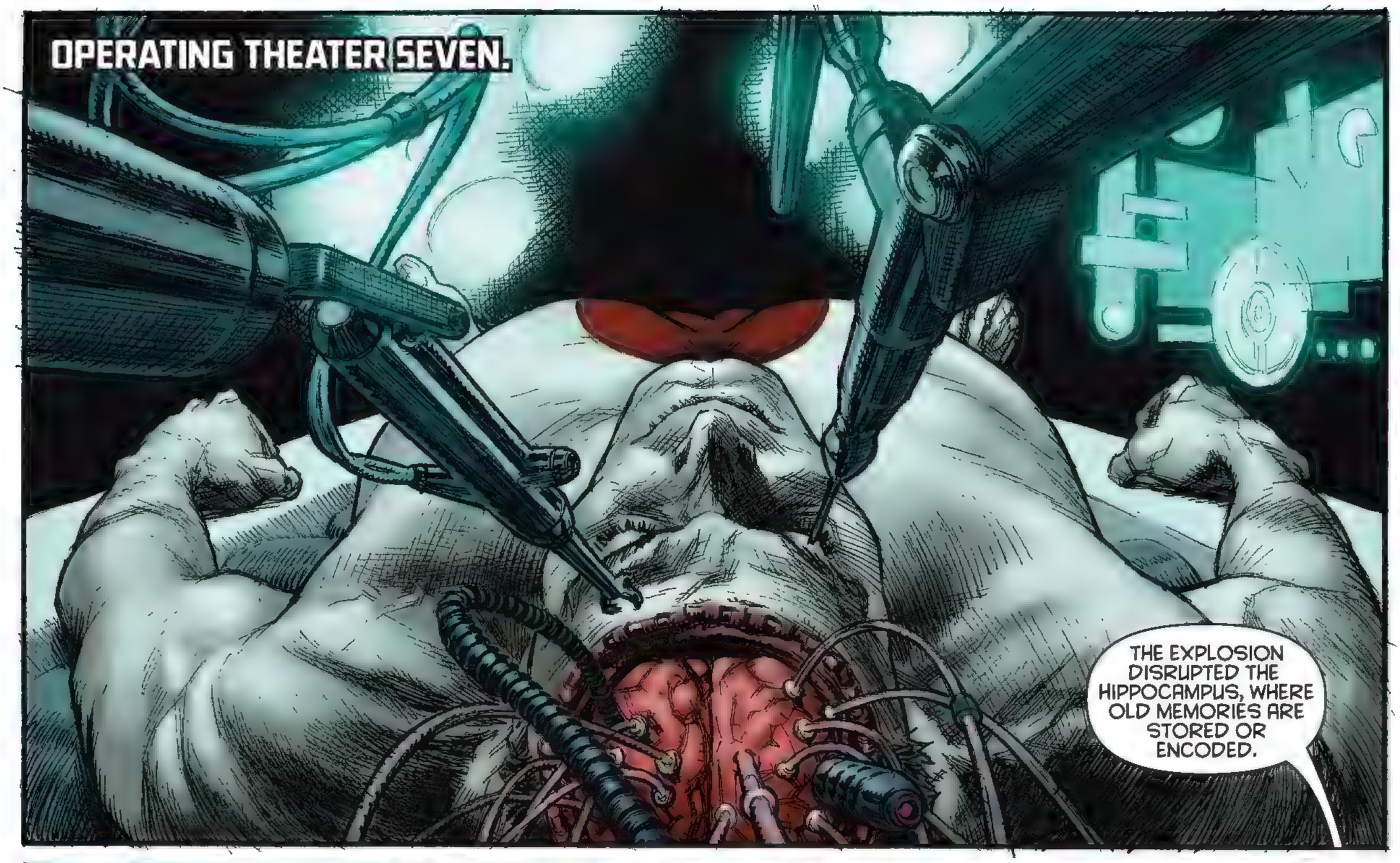


BLOODSHOT: THE GLITCH BY PETER MILLIGAN & LEWIS LAROSA

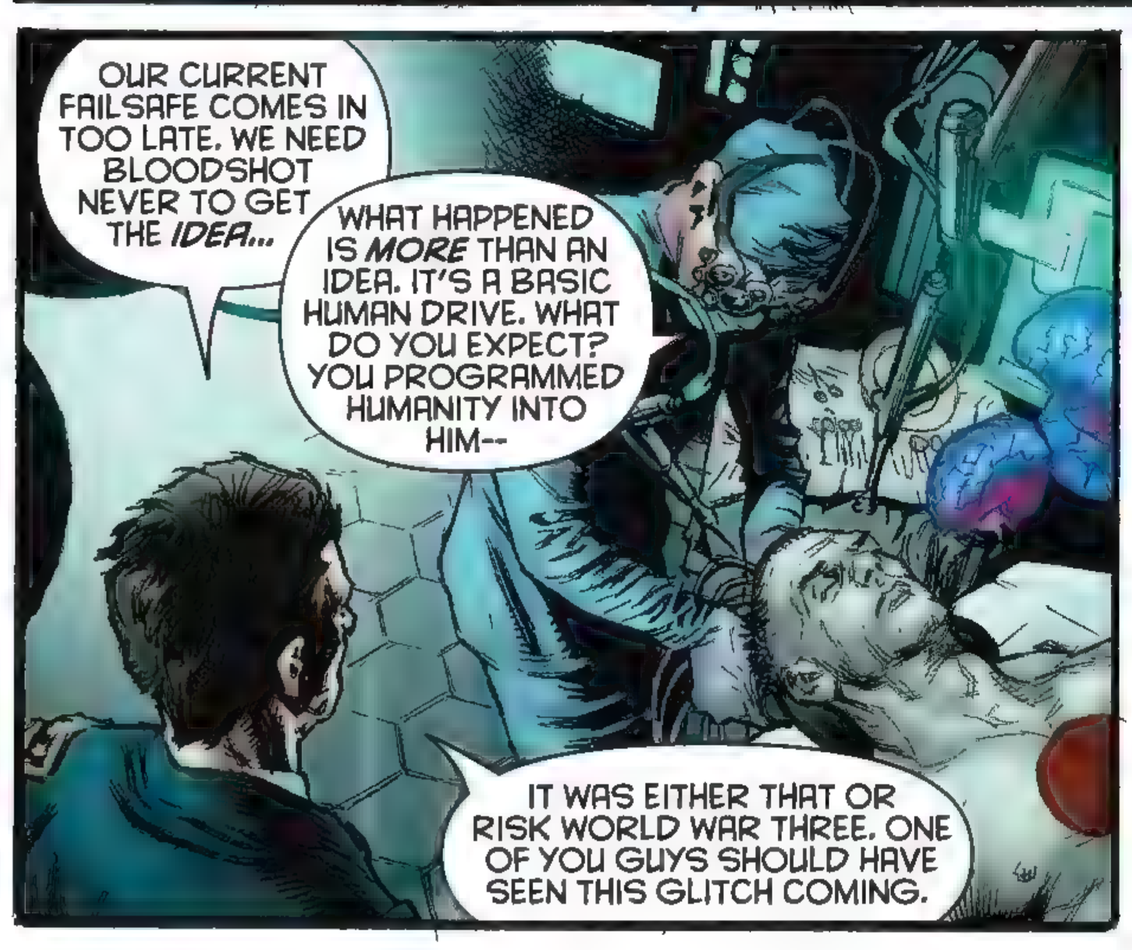
AN UNTOLD TALE OF BLOODSHOT BY HOWARD CHAYKIN

FEATURING DUANE SWIERCZYNSKI, MANUEL GARCÍA, BART SEARS, JUSTIN JORDAN, RAFER ROBERTS, AND MANY MORE!

"ITS CODE NAME IS *BLOODSHOT.*
"IT IS A WALKING WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION CREATED BY YOUR NEW EMPLOYER, *PROJECT RISING SPIRIT.*
"THANKS TO THE *RADICALLY ENHANCED NANITES* IN ITS BLOODSTREAM, BLOODSHOT POSSESS HIGHER LEVELS OF STRENGTH, SPEED, AND ENDURANCE.
"IT CAN RECOVER FROM *VIRTUALLY ANY INJURY.* ALTER ITS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE. COMMUNICATE WITH MACHINERY.
"ALL OF WHICH IS FORTUNATE, BECAUSE BLOODSHOT IS DEPLOYED IN THE TYPES OF MISSIONS THAT NO *ORDINARY SOLDIER* CAN SURVIVE.
"WE SUPPLY BLOODSHOT WITH FALSE MEMORIES TO KEEP IT ON-MISSION AND IN CONTROL. BUT SOMETIMES, THERE ARE *GLITCHES.*
"WHICH IS WHERE *YOU* COME IN."
YOUR JOB IS TO MAKE SURE IT NEVER, *EVER* GETS FREE.
ANY *QUESTIONS?*
PRS
PRS
TRAINING.DAY
WRITER: DUANE SWIERCZYNSKI
ARTIST: BART SEARS
COLORIST: ALLEN PASSALAQUA
LETTERER: DAVE SHARPE
EDITOR: ALEJANDRO ARBONA

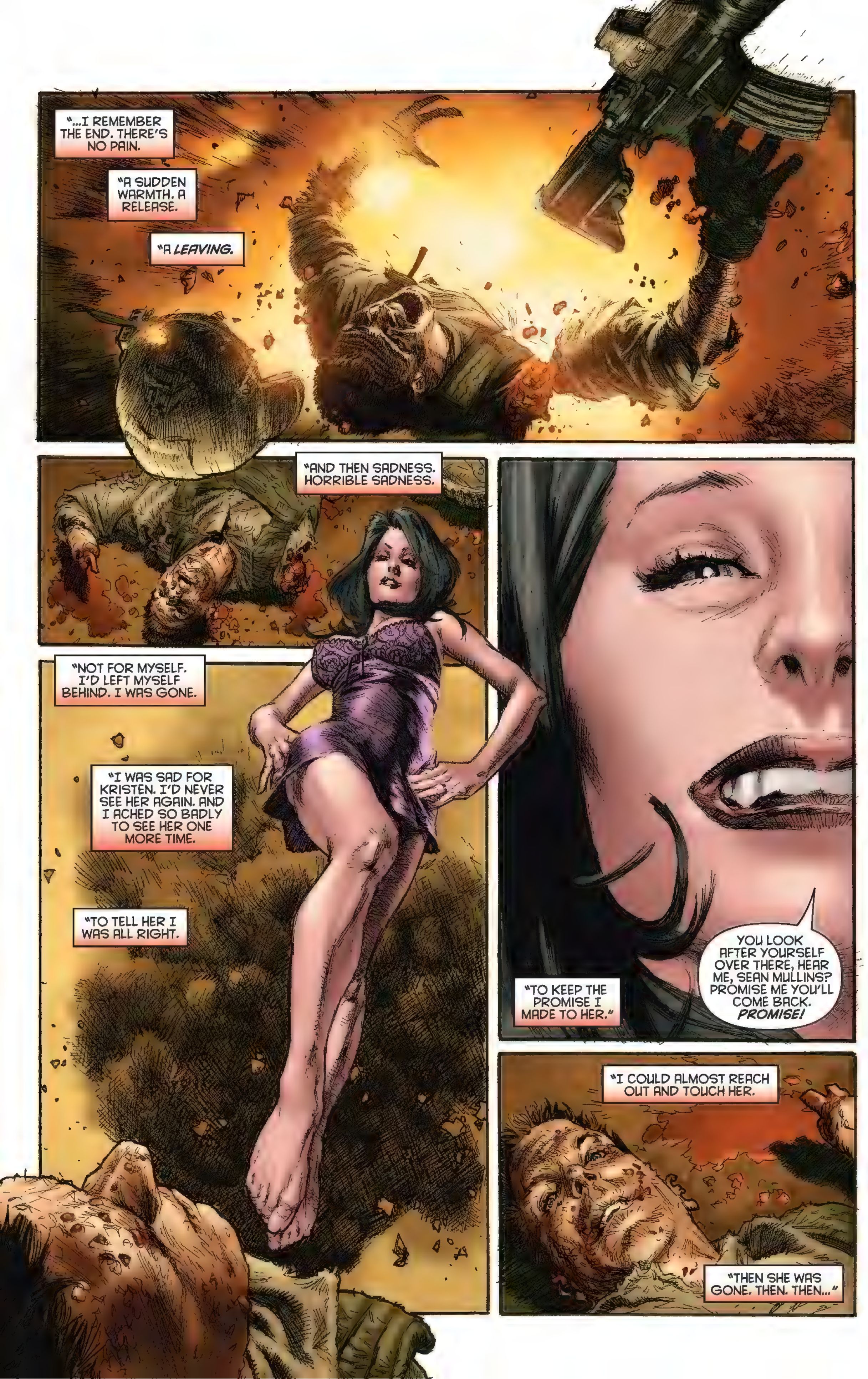

OPERATING THEATER SEVEN.
THE EXPLOSION DISRUPTED THE HIPPOCAMPUS, WHERE OLD MEMORIES ARE STORED OR ENCODED.

WHEN HIS NANITES STARTED TO SELF-REPLICATE, SOME EMOTIONAL INFORMATION MAY HAVE SEEPED FROM THE DENTATE GYRUS--
PLEASE, DOC, IF WE COULD SAVE THE MEDICAL LECTURE. WE REALLY DON'T CARE *HOW* IT WENT WRONG. WE JUST WANT YOU TO *FIX* IT.
DEEP COMA STATE ACHIEVED. HE'S READY, DOCTOR.

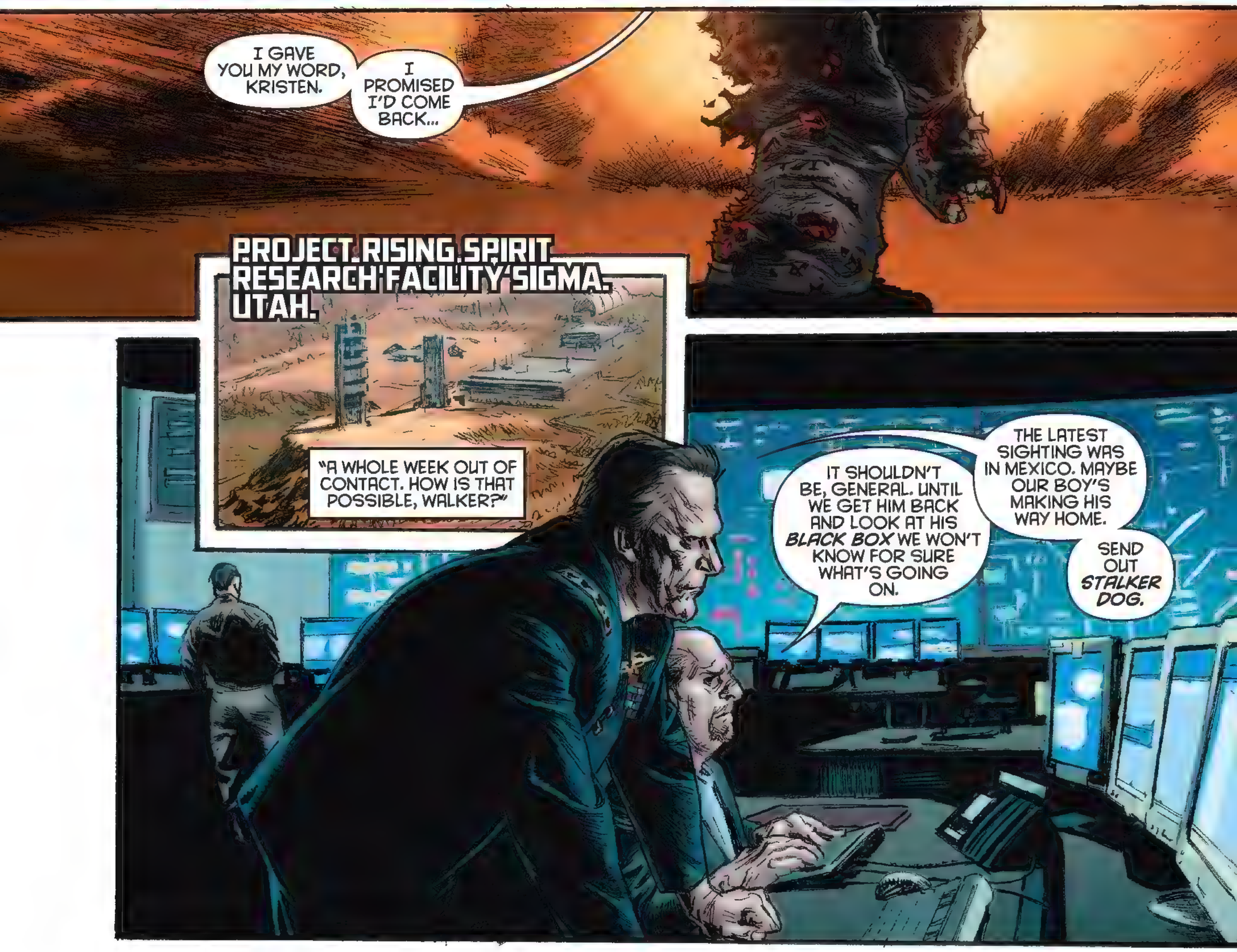

OUR CURRENT FAILSAFE COMES IN TOO LATE. WE NEED BLOODSHOT NEVER TO GET THE *IDEA*...
WHAT HAPPENED IS *MORE* THAN AN IDEA. IT'S A BASIC HUMAN DRIVE. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? YOU PROGRAMMED HUMANITY INTO HIM--
IT WAS EITHER THAT OR RISK WORLD WAR THREE. ONE OF YOU GUYS SHOULD HAVE SEEN THIS GLITCH COMING.

GLITCH?
IS *THAT* WHAT YOU CALL THIS, GENERAL? A *GLITCH?*

THREE WEEKS EARLIER.
ALEPPO, SYRIA.
TARGET'S IN THE SMALL HOUSE NEXT TO THE MARONITE CHURCH. WE THINK HE CONTROLS THE JIHADISTS WHO KILLED YOUR BUDDIES, SEAN.
GOT IT.
FRANK WINTERS. ANDRES VILLA. THEY WERE GOOD MEN.
THEY WERE THE BEST.
KABBOOOM
UGH!
SEAN?
ARE YOU HEARING ME, BUDDY?
AAAGHHH!
I...
I REMEMBER...

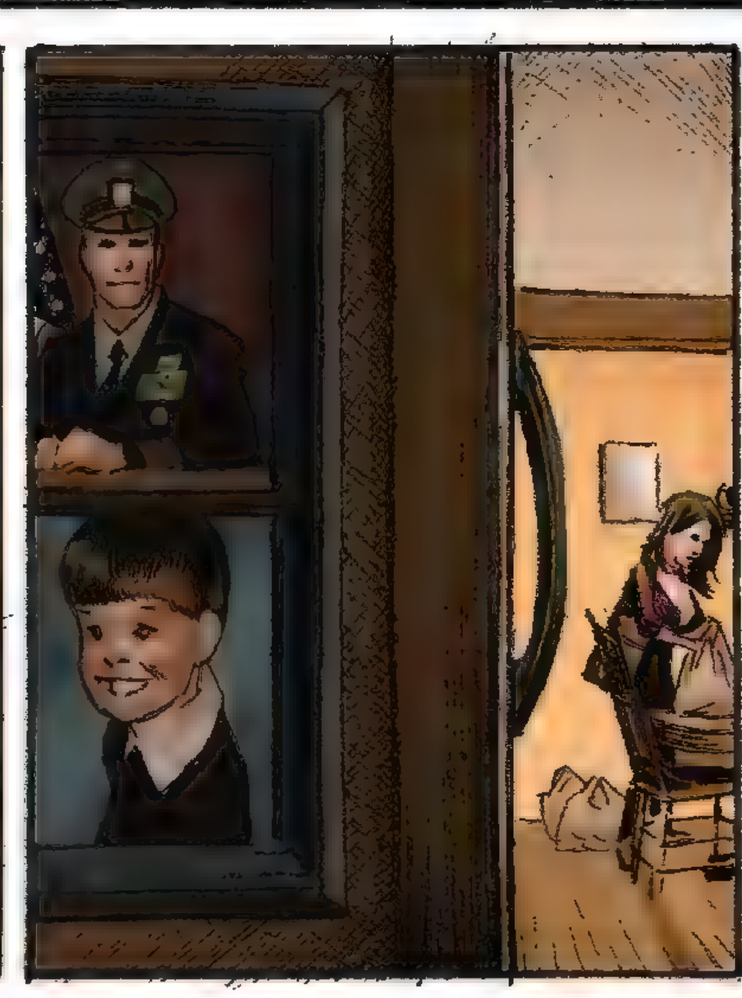

"...I REMEMBER THE END. THERE'S NO PAIN.
"A SUDDEN WARMTH. A RELEASE.
"A *LEAVING.*
"AND THEN SADNESS. HORRIBLE SADNESS.
"NOT FOR MYSELF. I'D LEFT MYSELF BEHIND. I WAS GONE.
"I WAS SAD FOR KRISTEN. I'D NEVER SEE HER AGAIN. AND I ACHED SO BADLY TO SEE HER ONE MORE TIME.
"TO TELL HER I WAS ALL RIGHT.
"TO KEEP THE PROMISE I MADE TO HER."
YOU LOOK AFTER YOURSELF OVER THERE, HEAR ME, SEAN MULLINS? PROMISE ME YOU'LL COME BACK. *PROMISE!*
"I COULD ALMOST REACH OUT AND TOUCH HER.
"THEN SHE WAS GONE. THEN. THEN..."

TH-THEN BLACKNESS. COLD. VOICES. MY NEW MISSION.
MY NEW LIFE.
BUT... BUT MY *OLD MEMORIES.*

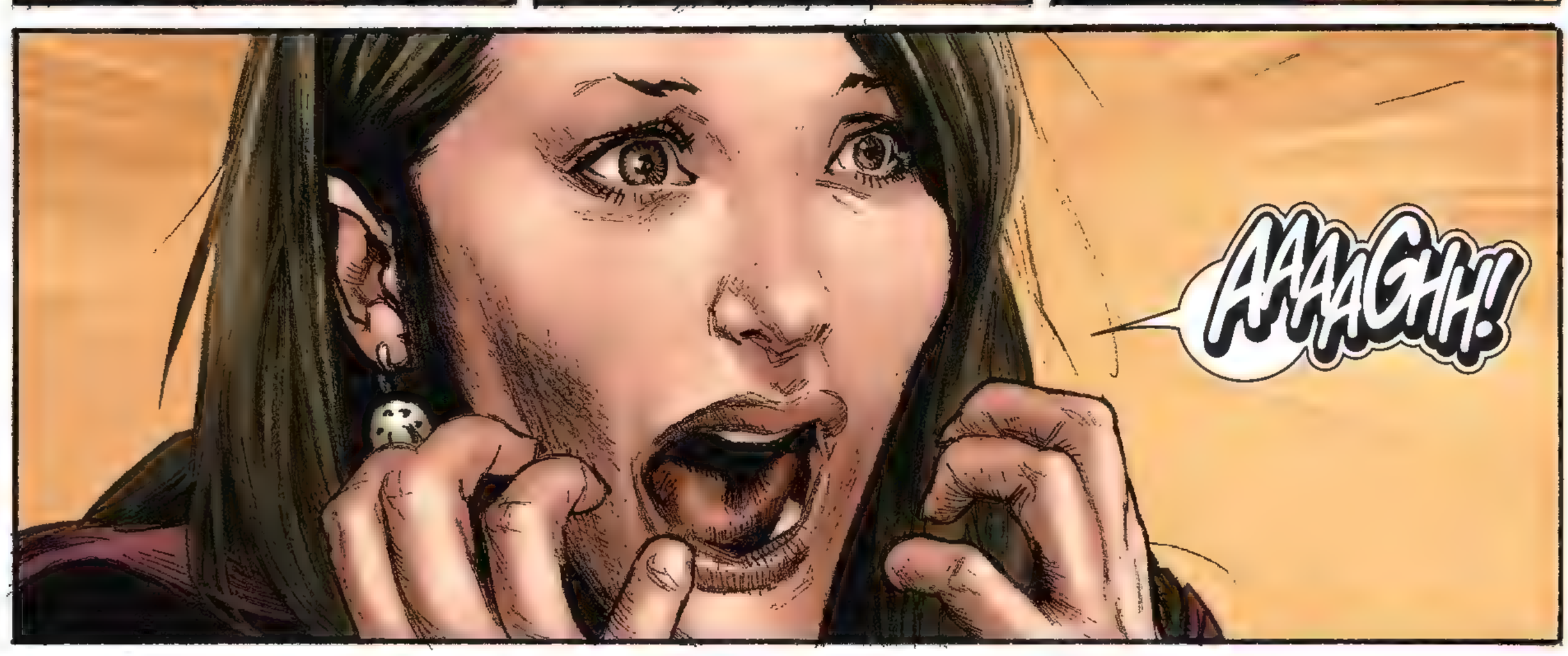

I GAVE YOU MY WORD, KRISTEN.
I PROMISED I'D COME BACK...
PROJECT RISING SPIRIT RESEARCH FACILITY SIGMA. UTAH.
"A WHOLE WEEK OUT OF CONTACT. HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE, WALKER?"
IT SHOULDN'T BE, GENERAL. UNTIL WE GET HIM BACK AND LOOK AT HIS *BLACK BOX* WE WON'T KNOW FOR SURE WHAT'S GOING ON.
THE LATEST SIGHTING WAS IN MEXICO. MAYBE OUR BOY'S MAKING HIS WAY HOME.
SEND OUT *STALKER DOG.*

THIS IS KRISTEN MULLINS. I TOOK MY CAR INTO YOUR GARAGE YESTERDAY AND IT'S STILL NOT RIGHT. COULD YOU CALL ME BACK, PLEASE?

CUCINA
I'M HOME, BOYS.



KRK
UH... HELLO?
MOM? IS THAT YOU? YOU DIDN'T TELL ME YOU--


AAAAGH!

YOU LOOK A LITTLE TIRED, KRISTEN.

WH-WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY HOUSE?
IT'S ME. SEAN. I'M HOME.
SEAN'S BEEN DEAD FOR THREE YEARS. NOW GET OUT BEFORE I CALL THE POLICE.

LISTEN. I DIDN'T DIE. THEY...THEY HAD TO MAKE IT LOOK THAT WAY. BUT I'M NOT DEAD, KRISTEN.
OH MY GOD. OH MY GOD.
I PROMISED I'D COME BACK TO YOU, DIDN'T I?
I'VE... MISSED YOU... SO MUCH.
YOU WERE ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT.

YOU FEEL SKINNIER. ARE YOU HUNGRY? OH MY, THIS IS SO INCREDIBLE.
S-SOME COFFEE WOULD BE GOOD. I'LL JUST GRAB SOMETHING FROM THE FRIDGE IF THAT'S OKAY.
OF COURSE. MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME. THIS *IS* YOUR HOME!

THERE'S COLD PIZZA IN THE FRIDGE. YOU ALWAYS LOVED COLD PIZZA. HOW LONG HAVE YOU GOT? THEY CAN'T TAKE YOU AWAY FROM ME AGAIN TOO SOON.

HOW LONG? I...I'M NOT SURE...

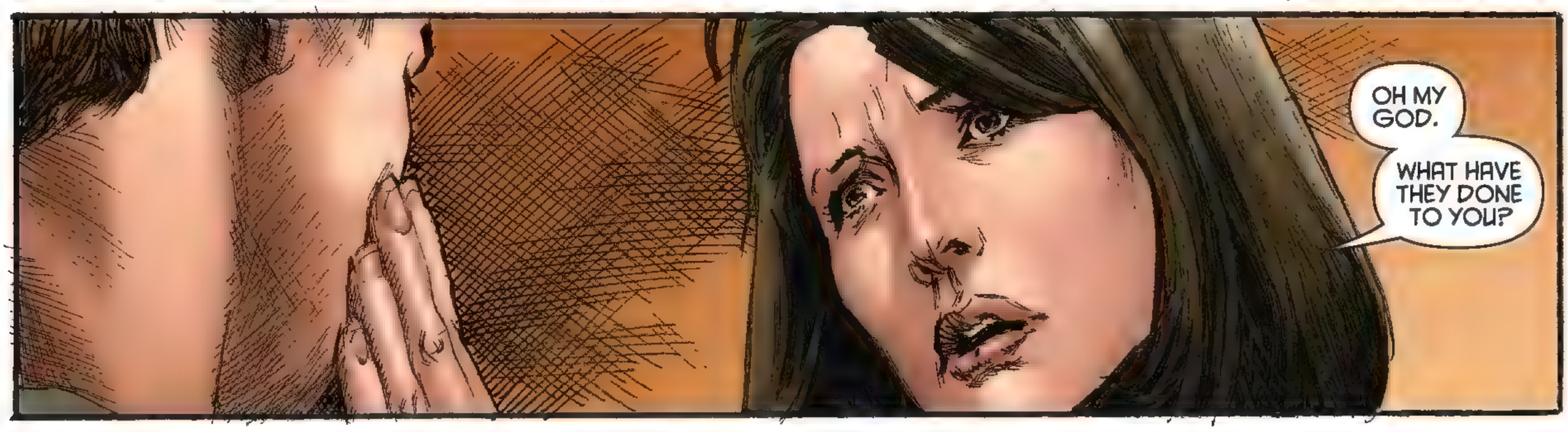
THEY SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME YOU WERE ALIVE. THEY SHOULD HAVE LET ME KNOW.
O-OUR FRIENDS WEREN'T THERE FOR ME, SEAN. EVEN MARY JANE AND COLETTE. IT WAS LIKE...LIKE THEY WERE SCARED I'D INFECT THEM. WITH DEATH OR GRIEF, I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE THEY--

SEAN?

YOU WERE RIGHT. I *WAS* HUNGRY.

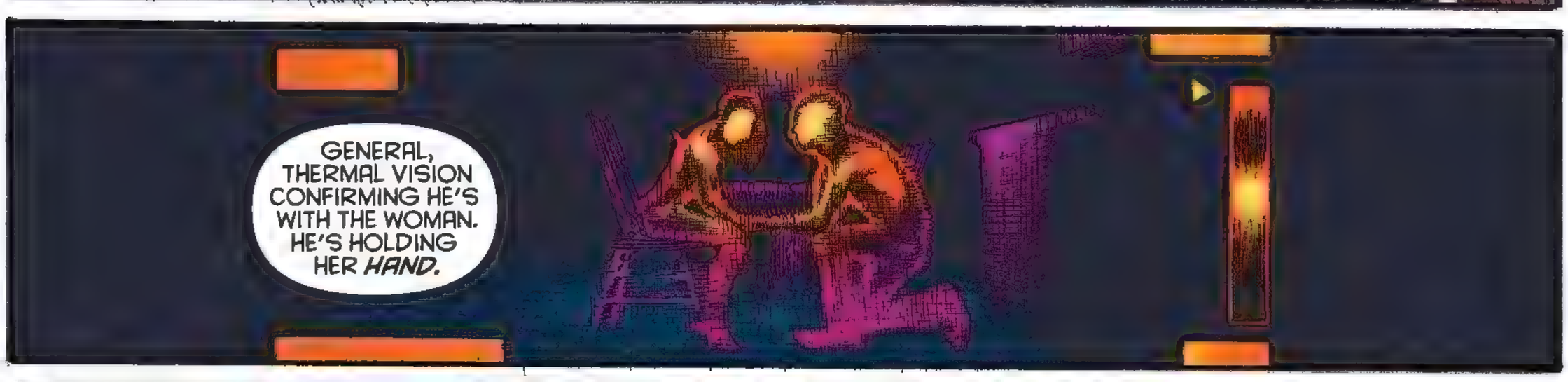
IT'S BEEN A LONG JOURNEY A-AND SHAPE-SHIFTING... IT BURNS UP ENERGY...
YOU'RE NOT SEAN. Y-YOU'RE... YOU'RE SOME KIND OF *MONSTER.*
I'M SEAN. BUT...YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M A MONSTER, TOO.

I...I REMEMBER THE DAY WE MET. YOU HAD A LISP YOU WERE SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT. I TOLD YOU IT WAS CUTE.
I REMEMBER WHEN POOR SEAN JUNIOR DIED. WE SAID WE'D MAKE HIM A BROTHER OR SISTER.
WE NEVER GOT THE CHANCE, DID WE?


OH MY GOD.
WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?

STALKER DOG ONE TO CONTROL. TARGET IN STRIKING DISTANCE. AWAITING FINAL ORDER.
STRIKE IMMEDIATELY WITH EXCESSIVE PREJUDICE. WE CAN PATCH THE RUNAWAY UP LATER.
02
03

ROGER THAT. SCANNING THERMALS...


GENERAL, THERMAL VISION CONFIRMING HE'S WITH THE WOMAN. HE'S HOLDING HER *HAND.*

NEVER KNEW YOU WERE SUCH A ROMANTIC, STALKER DOG. YOU HAVE YOUR ORDERS. BRING DOWN BLOODSHOT. AND *TAKE CARE* OF ANY COLLATERAL.
GENERAL, SHE'S A *CIVILIAN.*

BUTT OUT. THIS IS A MILITARY MATTER.

KABOOM
KABOOM
AAAGH!

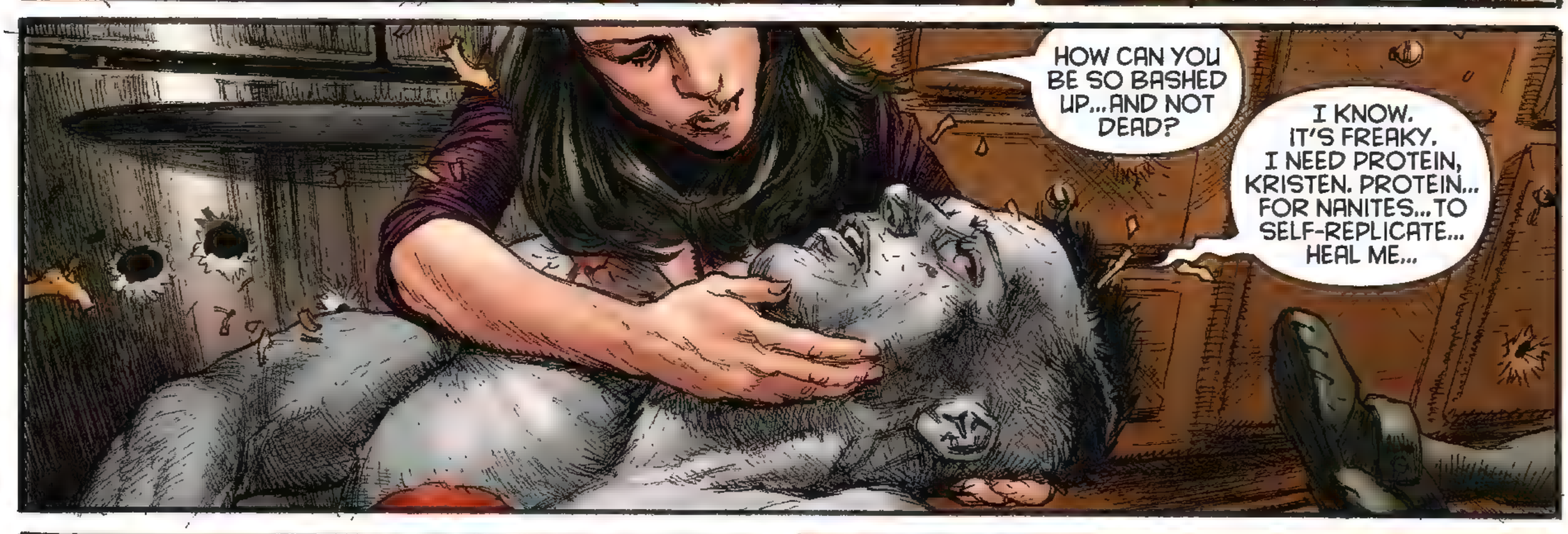
KRISTEN, STAY DOWN!
AGH! AGH! AGGH!
KABOOM KABOOM
KABOOM KABOOM
SEAN!

BHAFF
UGH!
MY GOD.
TAKING OUT THE COLLATERAL!
KRISTEN!

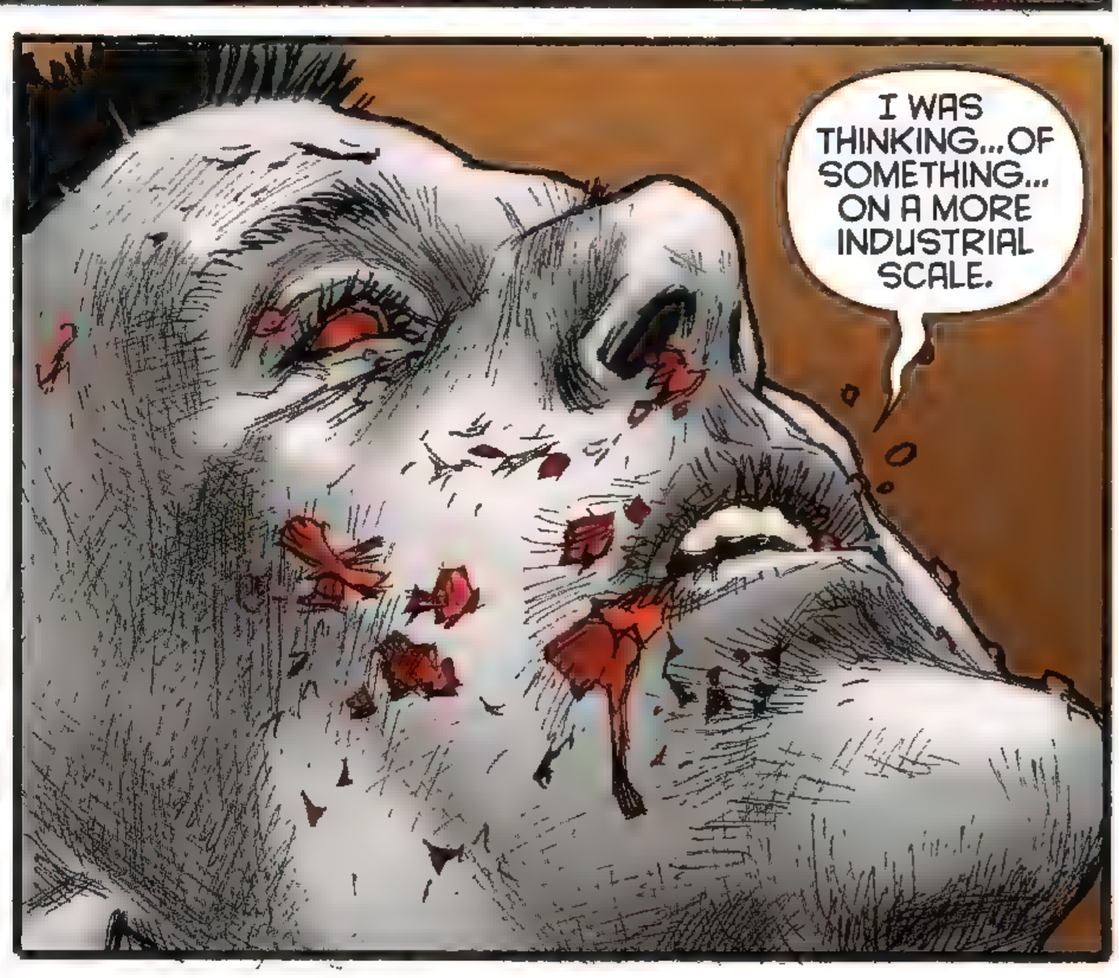
BOOOM
D-DOESN'T THAT *HURT?*
LIKE--*NNH!* LIKE HELL.... BUT I WON'T LET *THEM* KNOW.
YOU ALWAYS WERE A STUBBORN BASTARD.
THDD
OOF!
UNH--!
AAIIGH!
COME ON, FREAK. TIME TO GO--

BOOM
BOOM
BOOM

UGH...


HOW CAN YOU BE SO BASHED UP...AND NOT DEAD?
I KNOW. IT'S FREAKY. I NEED PROTEIN, KRISTEN. PROTEIN... FOR NANITES...TO SELF-REPLICATE... HEAL ME...

I-I'VE GOT TWO MORE STEAKS IN THE FREEZER. AND SOME EGGS...


I WAS THINKING...OF SOMETHING... ON A MORE INDUSTRIAL SCALE.

I...I HAD TO GIVE HIM A *MORPHINE SHOT,* HE WAS SCREAMING SO BAD. I THINK DOG THREE IS DEAD. THINGS DIDN'T GO EXACTLY TO PLAN HERE.

BLOODSHOT? WHERE IS HE?

"...SEAN MULLINS DIED THREE YEARS AGO."
THAT IS JUST ABOUT THE MOST DISGUSTING THING I'VE EVER SEEN.
YOU ALWAYS SAID I WAS A MESSY EATER.
YOU CHEW WITH YOUR MOUTH OPEN. YOU'LL SET A BAD EXAMPLE FOR SEAN JUNIOR.
I MEAN... YOU...YOU *WOULD* SET A BAD EXAMPLE... IF HE WAS...IF HE WASN'T...
WHEN DOES IT GET EASIER? I MEAN...WH-WHEN DOES IT STOP HURTING SO MUCH?
I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T THINK IT EVER DOES.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE *REALLY* SEAN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT *MEANS.* ALL I KNOW IS...
WHAT?
ALL I KNOW IS I'VE MISSED YOU.
AND THIS FEELS LIKE HAVING YOU BACK AGAIN.

MAKE LOVE TO ME. ONE MORE TIME.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
IT WILL BE BETTER FOR YOU LIKE THIS.

NO. PLEASE DON'T. I DON'T NEED TO PRETEND. I THINK I KNOW WHAT THIS IS. AND WHAT THIS ISN'T.
I'M SURE. BUT PLEASE...
IF YOU'RE SURE.

TALK TO ME...AS WE'RE DOING IT. TALK TO ME, SEAN.

I LOVE YOU, KRISTEN. I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU...
HMM...

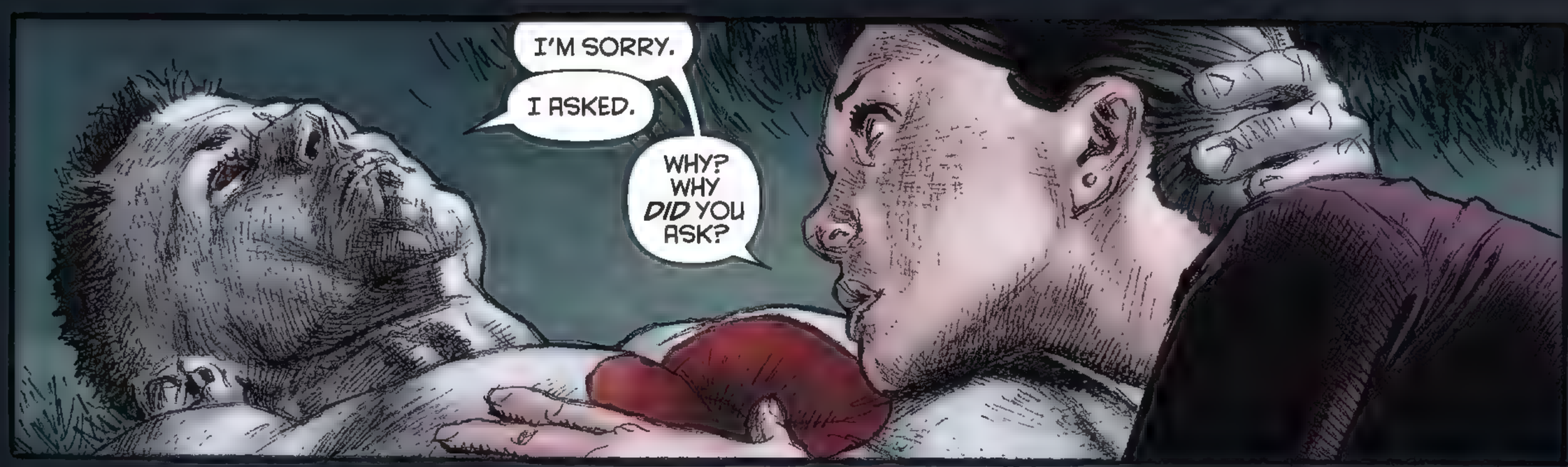
I'VE LOCATED THE DOUBLE-FAILSAFE PROTOCOL. DEEP IN A TEMPLATE OF UNRELATED ALGORITHMS. EITHER VERY CLEVER OR VERY MESSY.
THEN IMPLEMENT. *IMMEDIATELY.*

GENERAL, IS THIS STRICTLY NECESSARY?
I'M GROWING TIRED OF YOUR LIP, WALKER.
I JUST DON'T SEE WHY INNOCENT PEOPLE SHOULD--

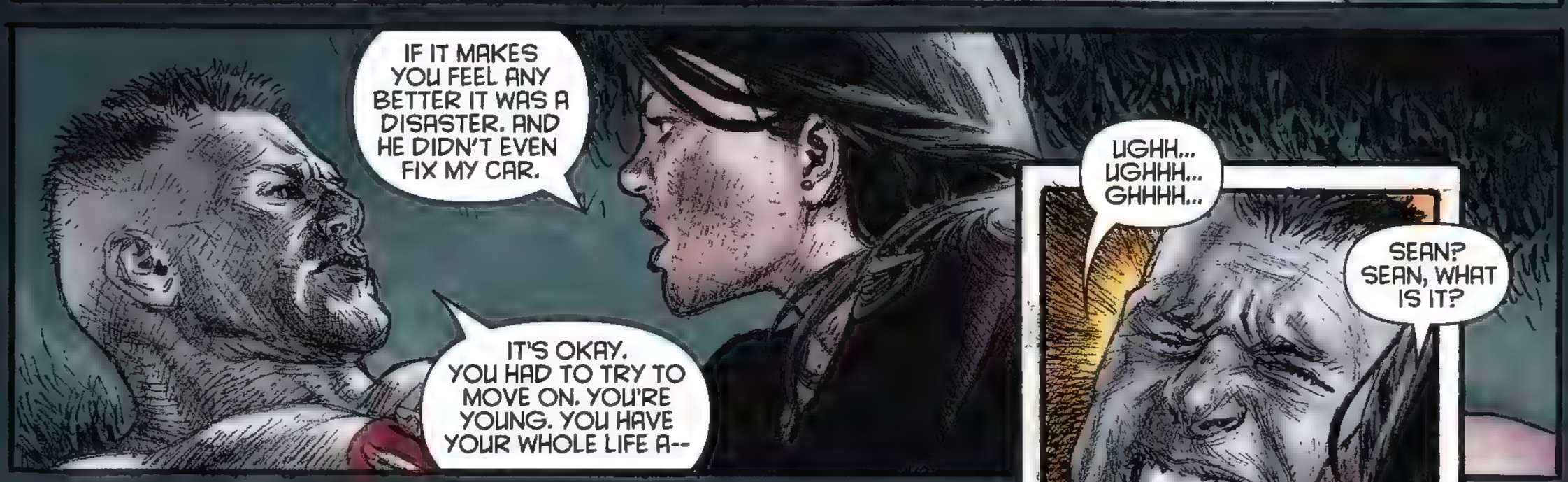
IMPLEMENT IT, WALKER. *NOW.*
SEAN MULLINS MIGHT HAVE DIED IN LIBYA. BUT HE'S STILL A NAVY SEAL.

"AND HE'S TRAINED TO OBEY ORDERS..."
IT'S BEEN THREE YEARS. TELL ME THE TRUTH. HAS THERE BEEN ANYONE ELSE?
SEAN, PLEASE.
IT'S OKAY. I WON'T BE MAD. I JUST WANT TO KNOW.

ALL RIGHT. HIS NAME WAS WARREN. HE WAS A CAR MECHANIC BUT...HE HAD NICE HANDS.
HE SEEMED KIND. AND NOT INSANE. AND...I WAS LONELY.


I'M SORRY.
I ASKED.
WHY? WHY *DID* YOU ASK?

IT'S ONE OF THE THINGS YOU THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU'RE GOING INTO A REAL DANGEROUS OPERATION. "IF I BUY IT...HOW SOON BEFORE SHE TAKES UP WITH ANOTHER MAN?"
I DID NOT *TAKE UP* WITH HIM!


IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL ANY BETTER IT WAS A DISASTER. AND HE DIDN'T EVEN FIX MY CAR.
IT'S OKAY. YOU HAD TO TRY TO MOVE ON. YOU'RE YOUNG. YOU HAVE YOUR WHOLE LIFE A--

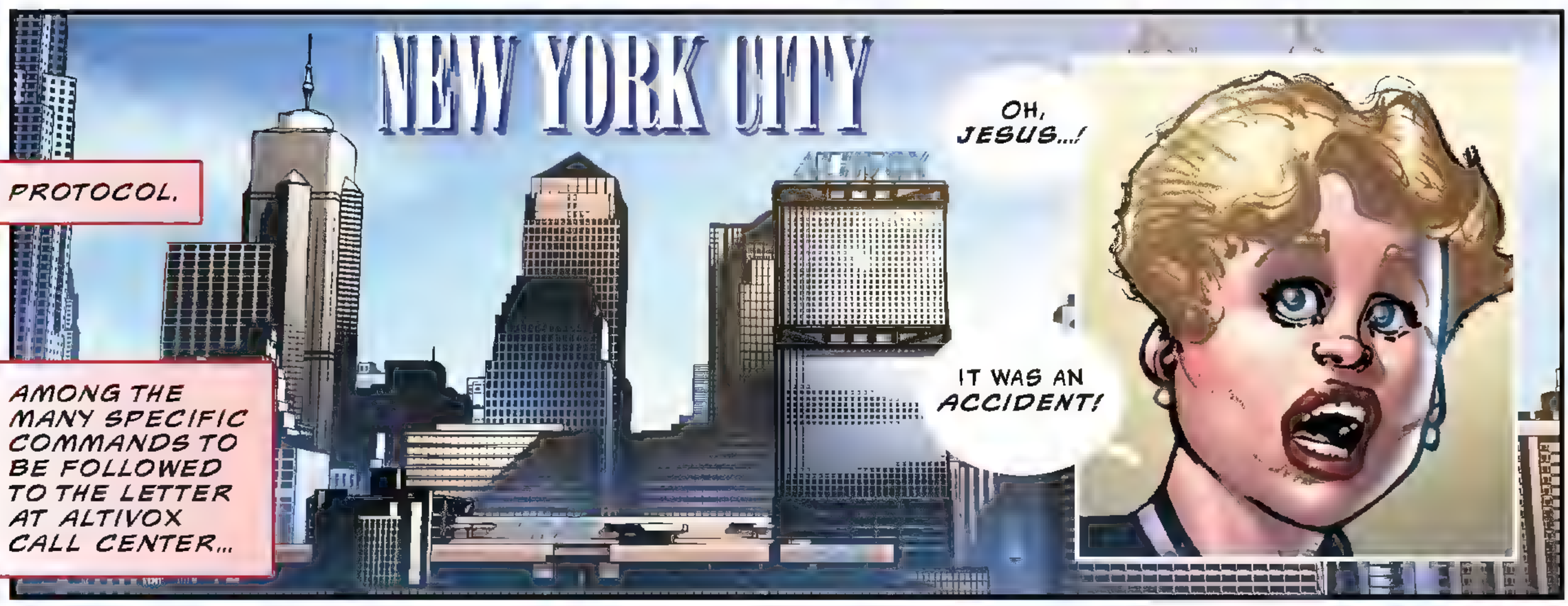
UGHH... UGHHH... GHHHH...
SEAN? SEAN, WHAT IS IT?

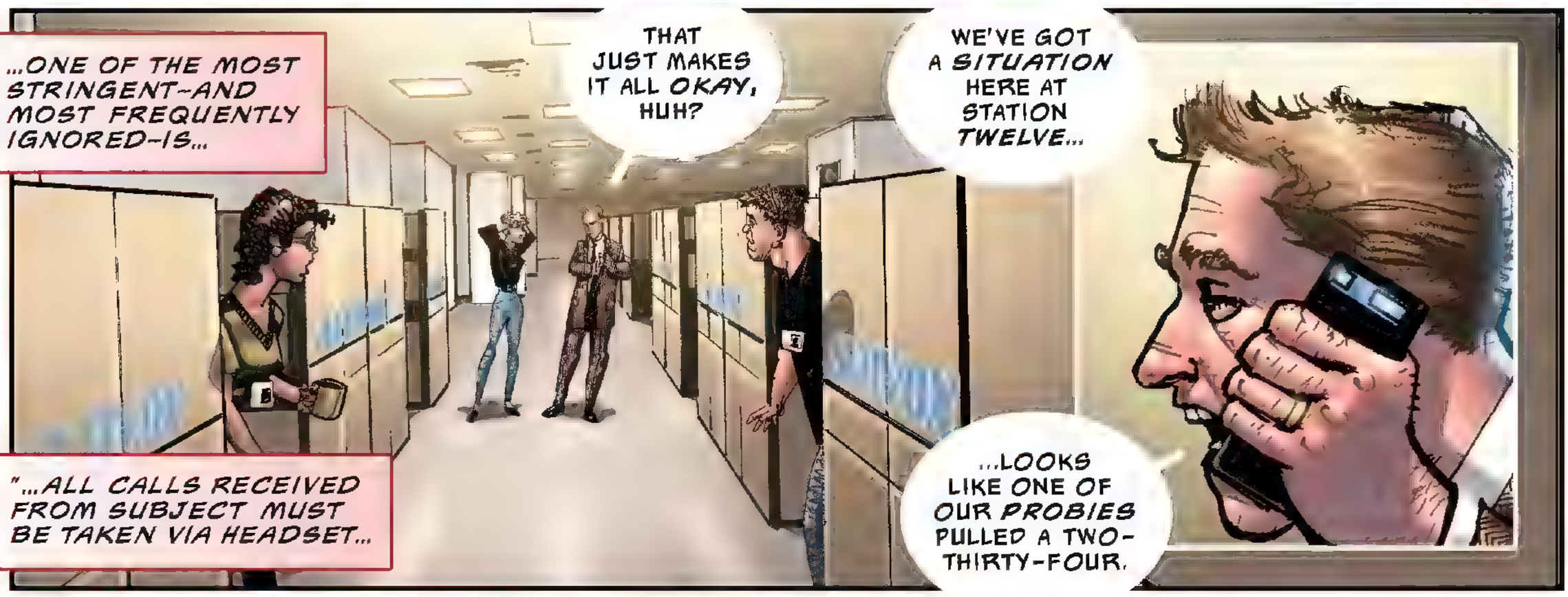
SEAN, WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU? SEAN, STOP THIS... Y-YOU'RE *SCARING* ME.
"DOUBLE-FAILSAFE IMPLEMENTED."

IT'S DONE. THE FINAL FAILSAFE.
WE TRIED TO THINK OF EVERYTHING. BUT THE DOUBLE-FAILSAFE PROTOCOL COMES IN TOO LATE.
"...DANGEROUSLY LATE."
"THE 'GLITCH,' AS YOU CALL IT, GENERAL..."

"...GLITCH OR NO GLITCH."

THE END

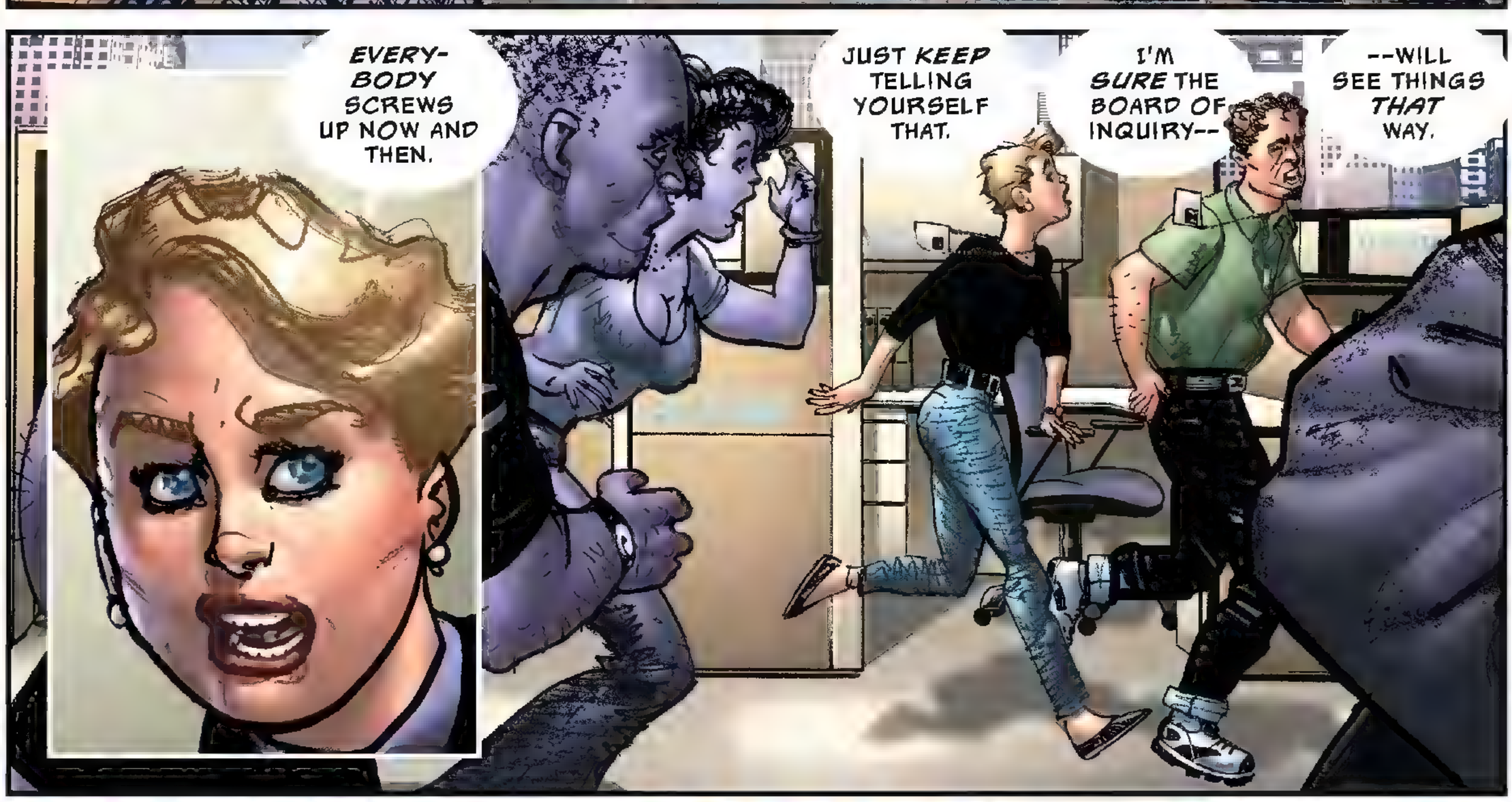

NEW YORK CITY
PROTOCOL.
AMONG THE MANY SPECIFIC COMMANDS TO BE FOLLOWED TO THE LETTER AT ALTIVOX CALL CENTER...
OH, JESUS...!
IT WAS AN ACCIDENT!


...ONE OF THE MOST STRINGENT-AND MOST FREQUENTLY IGNORED-IS...
"...ALL CALLS RECEIVED FROM SUBJECT MUST BE TAKEN VIA HEADSET...
THAT JUST MAKES IT ALL OKAY, HUH?
WE'VE GOT A SITUATION HERE AT STATION TWELVE...
...LOOKS LIKE ONE OF OUR PROBIES PULLED A TWO-THIRTY-FOUR.

"...IT IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN TO USE A SPEAKERPHONE IN ANY CONTACT WITH THE SUBJECT."
NO !¢@#*!...
...SOON'S HE HEARD HER *¢%$* OVER THE OPEN LINE, HE CLOTHESLINED TWO HANDLERS AND BOOKED...
...HE'S ALREADY HALFWAY ACROSS TOWN ON HIS WAY TO YOU.
DELICATESSEN
RESTAURANT
PROTOCOL
story & art by
HOWARD CHAYKIN
colors by
JESUS ABURTO & ARTURO ALBORES
letters by
KEN BRUZENAK
edits by
ALEJANDRO ARBONA

THEY'VE GOT MY WIFE AND KIDS...
...THEY DON'T KNOW WHO THEY'RE *%#@#*ING WITH.
WE'RE ON HIM, AND WE'LL GET HIM...
...BUT, JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE, I'D STRONGLY RECOMMEND THE SAFE ROOM.
ROGER THAT.

I'VE GOT *EYES* ON HIM, SIR...
...DO YOU WANT TO TAKE HIM *OUT* ON THE STREET?
AFTER *DARK*, MAYBE. *BEFORE* DAWN, SURE.
BUT JUST BEFORE *RUSH* HOUR?
IT'LL BE EASIER TO COVER *THIS* UP THAN TO *X$%#¢!#* OUR WAY THROUGH THIS *AND* AN AIRBORNE FIRE ASSAULT.


EVERY-BODY SCREWS UP NOW AND THEN.
JUST *KEEP* TELLING YOURSELF THAT.
I'M *SURE* THE BOARD OF INQUIRY--
--WILL SEE THINGS *THAT* WAY.

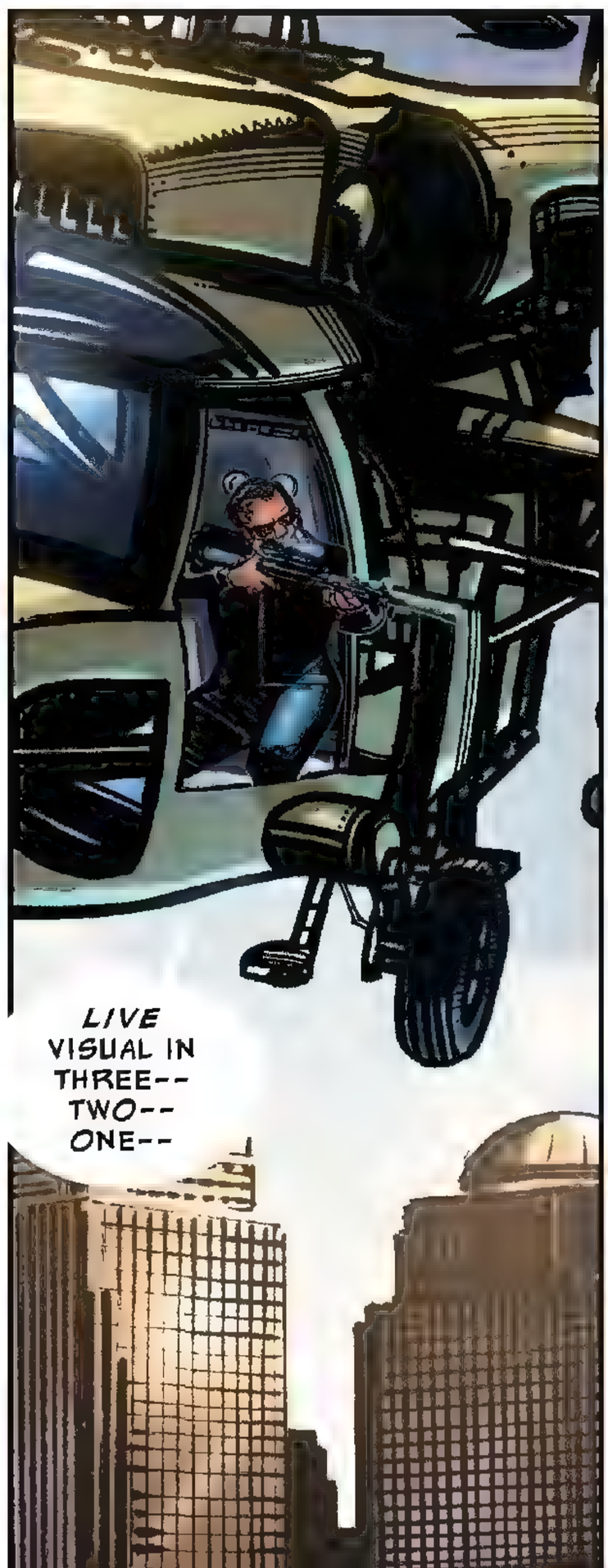
THE PEOPLE YOU *WORK* FOR ARE HOLDING MY FAMILY *HOSTAGE!*
COMMAND... *HELLO—*
WHERE'S THAT *BACKUP* YOU PROMISED?!
WE *NEE--*

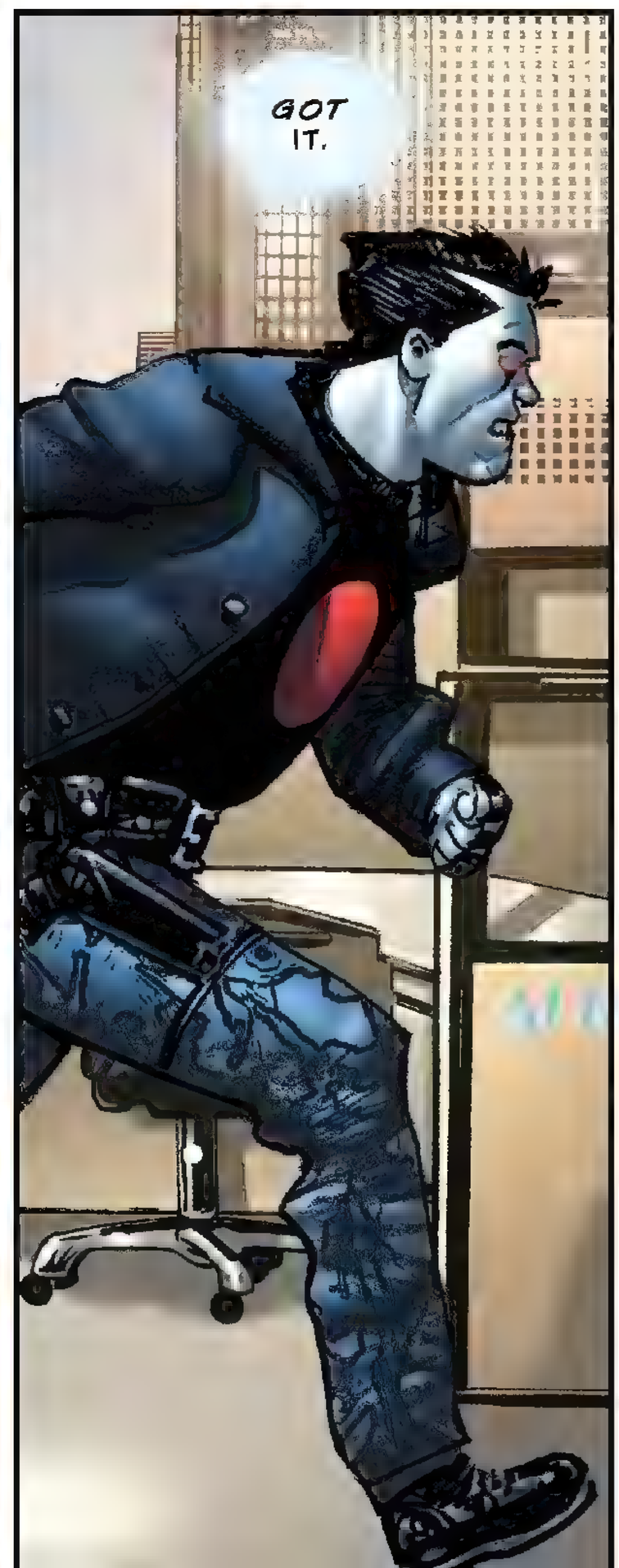
--UNGHKK!

HE'S IN.

MAINTAINING HEAT SIGNATURES.

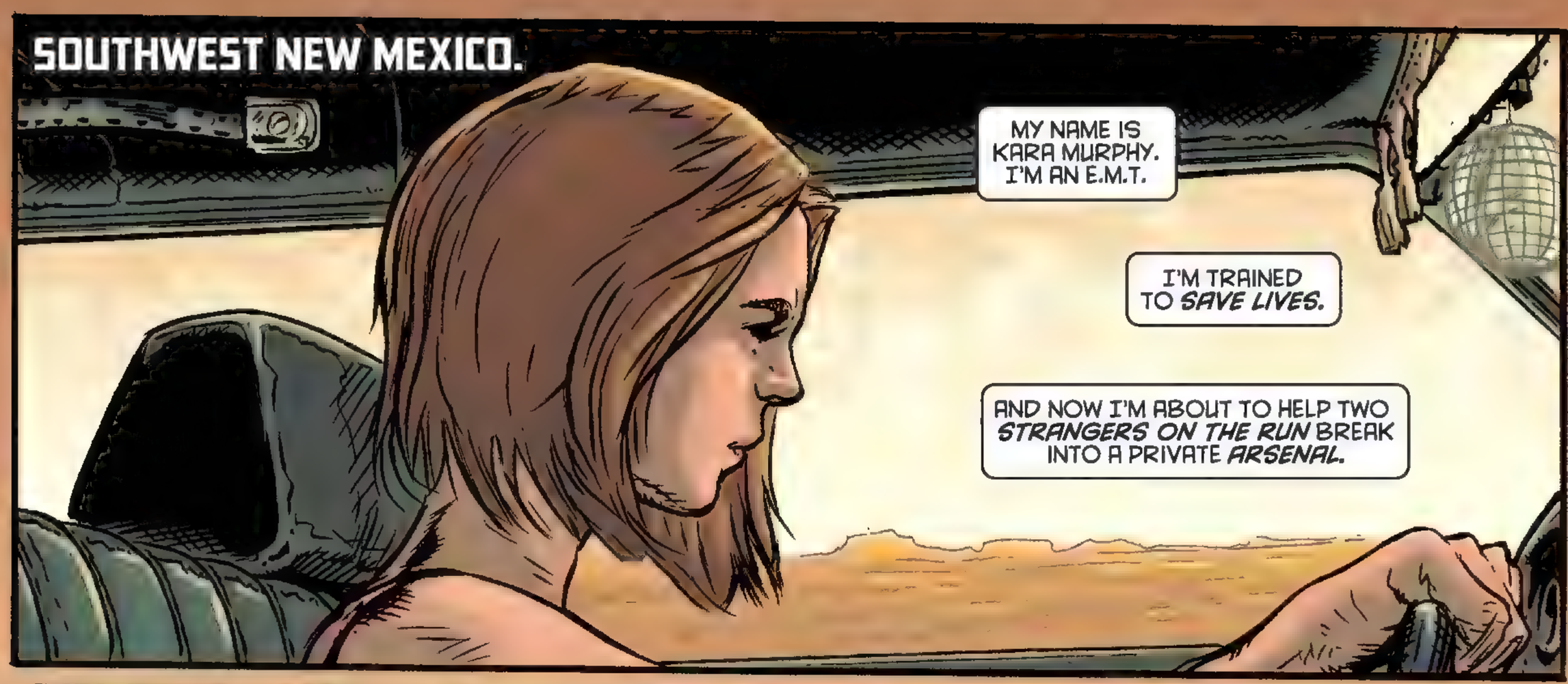
LAST SAFE ROOM DOOR CLOSING.

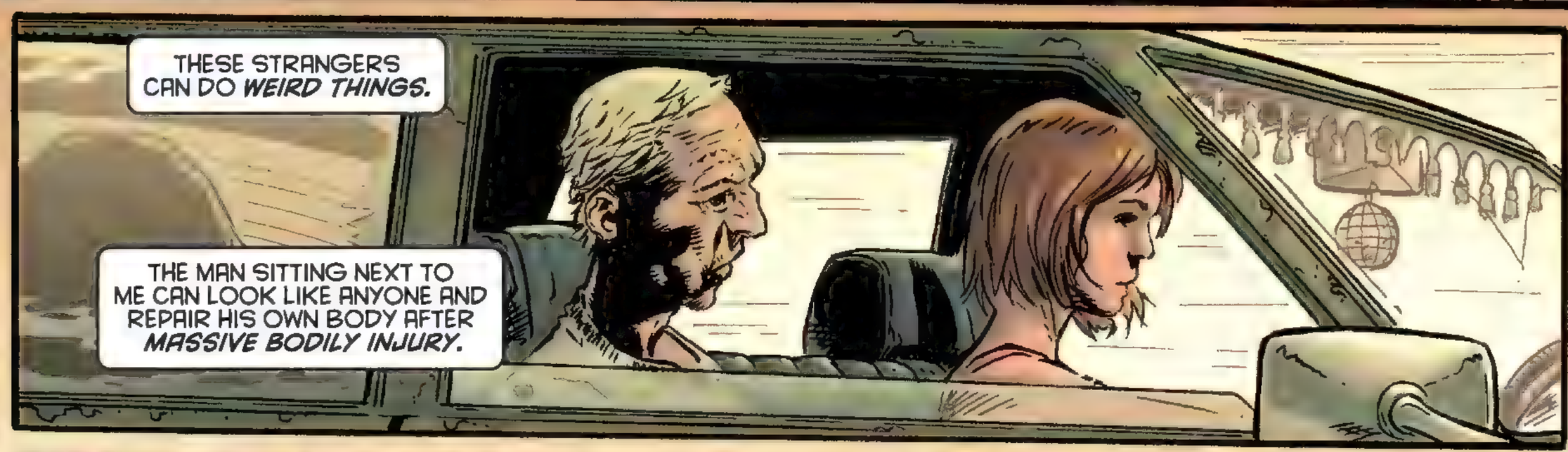

LIVE VISUAL IN THREE-- TWO-- ONE--

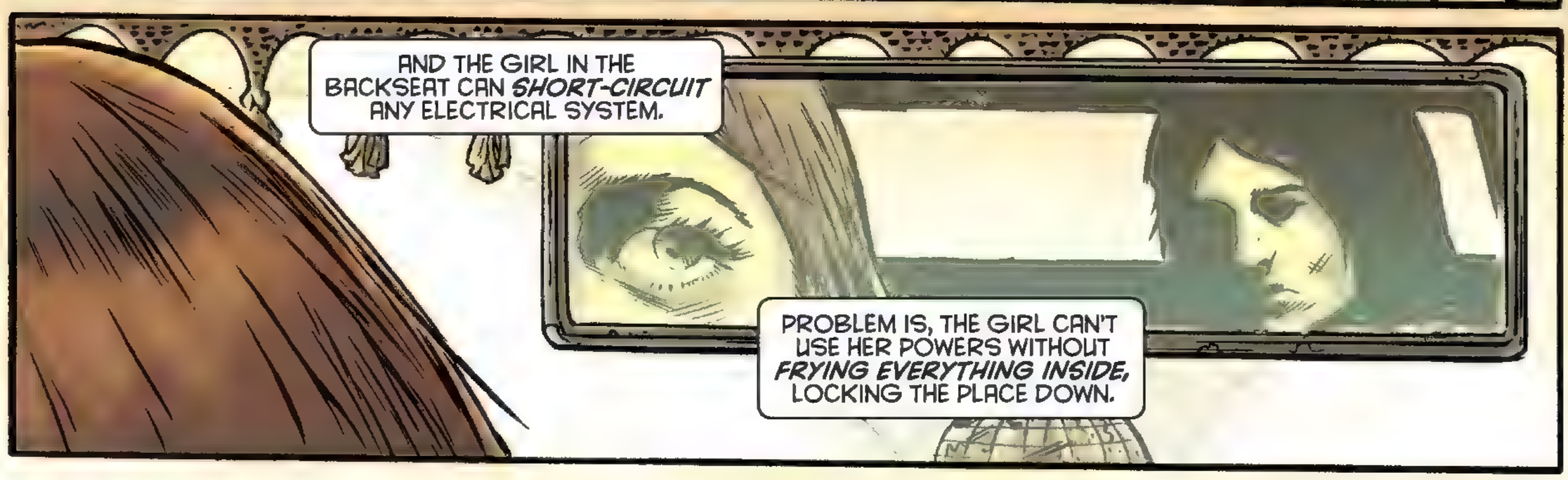

GOT IT.

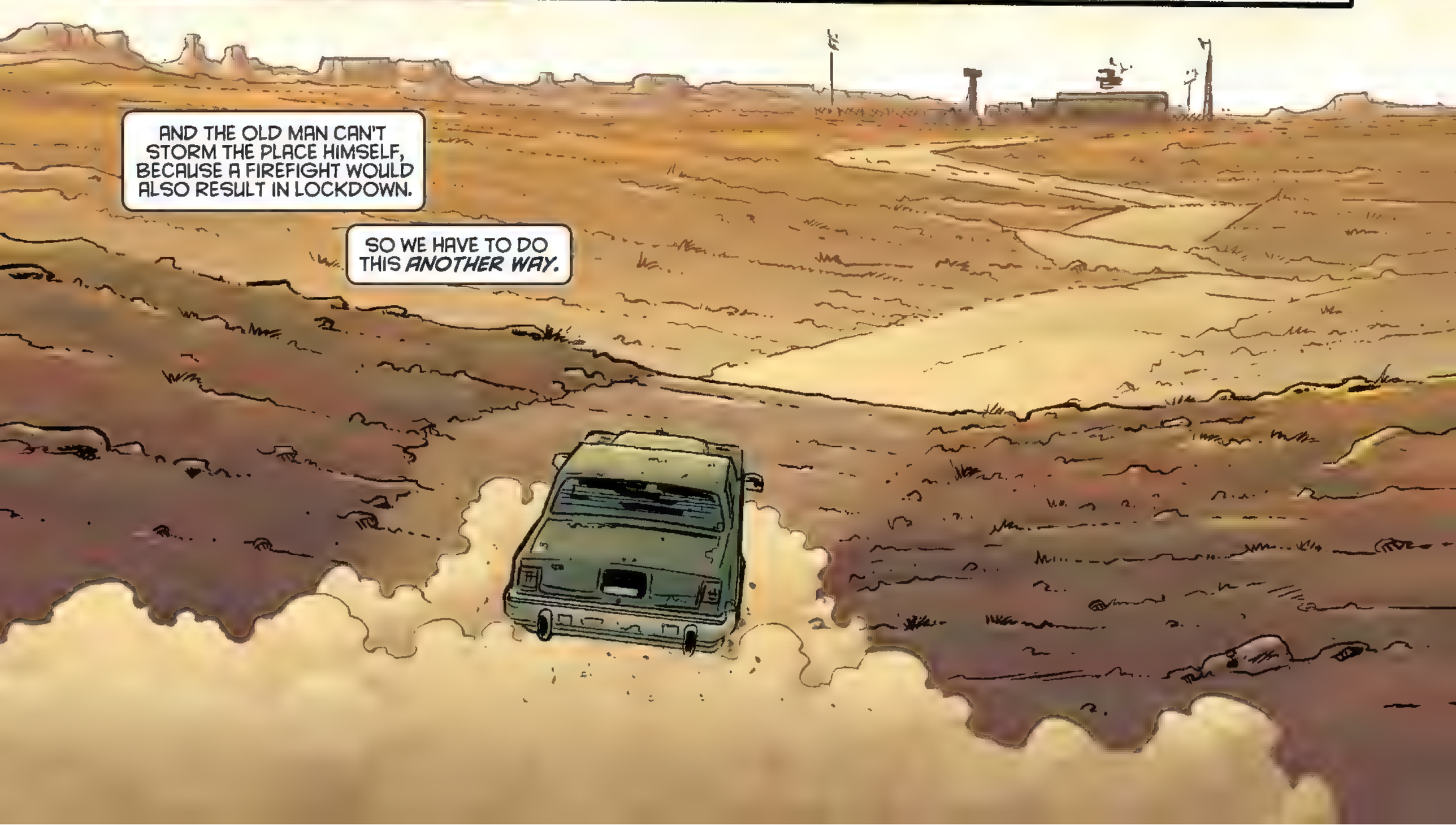
BLOODSHOT IS A CONSTRUCT...
...A SOULLESS, FORMERLY HUMAN, CYBER-NANITIC ORGANISM...
...A BODY, RESEMBLING A MAN, SERVING AS HOST...
...TO BILLIONS OF NANITES-- ROBOTS THAT MAKE HIM MORE MONSTER THAN MAN...
...BUT ONCE THOSE ROBOTS ARE DEPROGRAMMED, BLOOD-SHOT ISN'T MUCH MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED POUNDS OF PISS-POOR PROTOPLASM.
HE'S DOWN.
I'LL HIT ALL CLEAR.
PUT A PIN IN THAT, WHY DON'T YOU?
THE WOMAN'S SCREW-UP COST THREE LIVES AND MADE A MASSIVE COVER-UP NECESSARY...
...NOT TO MENTION THE MILLIONS THIS IS GOING TO COST IN REPRO-GRAMMING.
LET 'EM ALL SIT IN THEIR OWN SWEAT FOR A WHILE.
ID

PIN-UP BY JAY FABARES


SOUTHWEST NEW MEXICO.
MY NAME IS KARA MURPHY. I'M AN E.M.T.
I'M TRAINED TO *SAVE LIVES.*
AND NOW I'M ABOUT TO HELP TWO *STRANGERS ON THE RUN* BREAK INTO A PRIVATE *ARSENAL.*


THESE STRANGERS CAN DO *WEIRD THINGS.*
THE MAN SITTING NEXT TO ME CAN LOOK LIKE ANYONE AND REPAIR HIS OWN BODY AFTER *MASSIVE BODILY INJURY.*


AND THE GIRL IN THE BACKSEAT CAN *SHORT-CIRCUIT* ANY ELECTRICAL SYSTEM.
PROBLEM IS, THE GIRL CAN'T USE HER POWERS WITHOUT *FRYING EVERYTHING INSIDE,* LOCKING THE PLACE DOWN.


AND THE OLD MAN CAN'T STORM THE PLACE HIMSELF, BECAUSE A FIREFIGHT WOULD ALSO RESULT IN LOCKDOWN.
SO WE HAVE TO DO THIS *ANOTHER WAY.*

A WAY THAT REQUIRES MY ABILITY TO *SAVE LIVES.*

HOLD ON! *STOP YOUR VEHICLE!*

I'M SORRY, BUT OUR G.P.S. BROUGHT US HERE.

I NEED A TOILET, *DAMN IT!* YOU TOLD ME THERE'D BE A TOILET.

I *HATE* TO DO THIS, BUT WE REALLY NEED--

IF THIS KNUCKLEHEAD WON'T SHOW ME THE WAY I'LL GO RIGHT HERE!

DAD, *PLEASE!*

THIS IS SOOOO EMBARRASSING.

SIR, THERE ARE *NO* PUBLIC FACILITIES HERE...

I'M NOT THE PUBLIC, YOU IDIOT! I'M A U.S. MARINE AND *I PAY YOUR SALARY!*

I'M NO SURGEON, BUT THERE'S ONE THING I KNOW ABOUT HEARTS.

THEY HAVE ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS, TOO.

EZZZZOK

I DID IT IN AREA 52

NORTON? WHAT THE HELL--
I'M AN E.M.T./ I CAN HELP HIM!

I NEED A DEFIB MACHINE-- YOU GUYS HAVE ONE INSIDE?
UH...
I NEED TO RESTART HIS HEART!
STANTON! PIKE! GET THE DEFIB PACK OUT HERE!

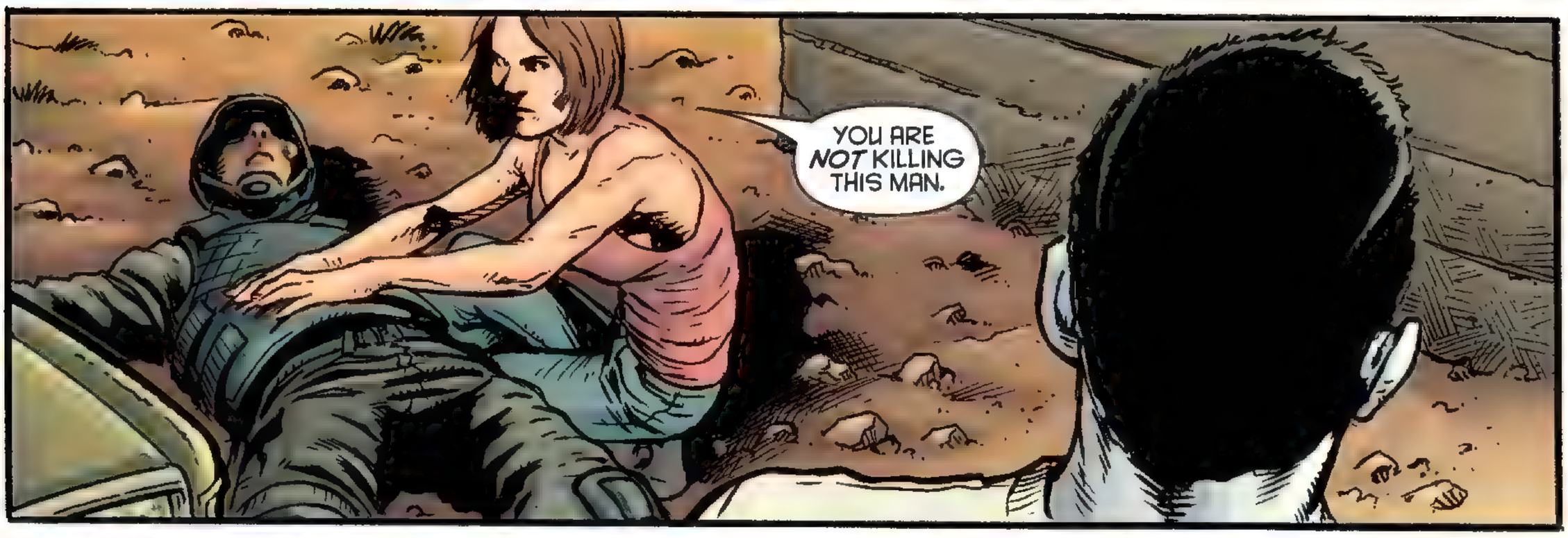
I MADE THE STRANGER PROMISE: NO MORE KILLING.
WE MAY BE PULLING A TRICK TO GET INSIDE, BUT NOBODY DIES.

WHAK

WEAPONS ON
THE GROUND!

FINGERS LACED BEHIND YOUR HEADS, NOW!

PLEASE DO WHAT HE SAYS, WE'RE NOT GOING TO HURT ANYB--
DROP HIM!
BLAM
NO WAY...
BLAM BLAM
NOOOOO!
IF YOU KNEW WHAT THESE MEN HAVE DONE, WHAT THEY WERE PAID TO DO, YOU WOULDN'T BE SO EAGER TO SPARE THEM.
LIKE YOU KNOW?!
I DO. MY NANITES ARE ACCESSING THEIR COMPUTER SYSTEMS NOW AND READING THEIR FILES.


YOU ARE *NOT* KILLING THIS MAN.

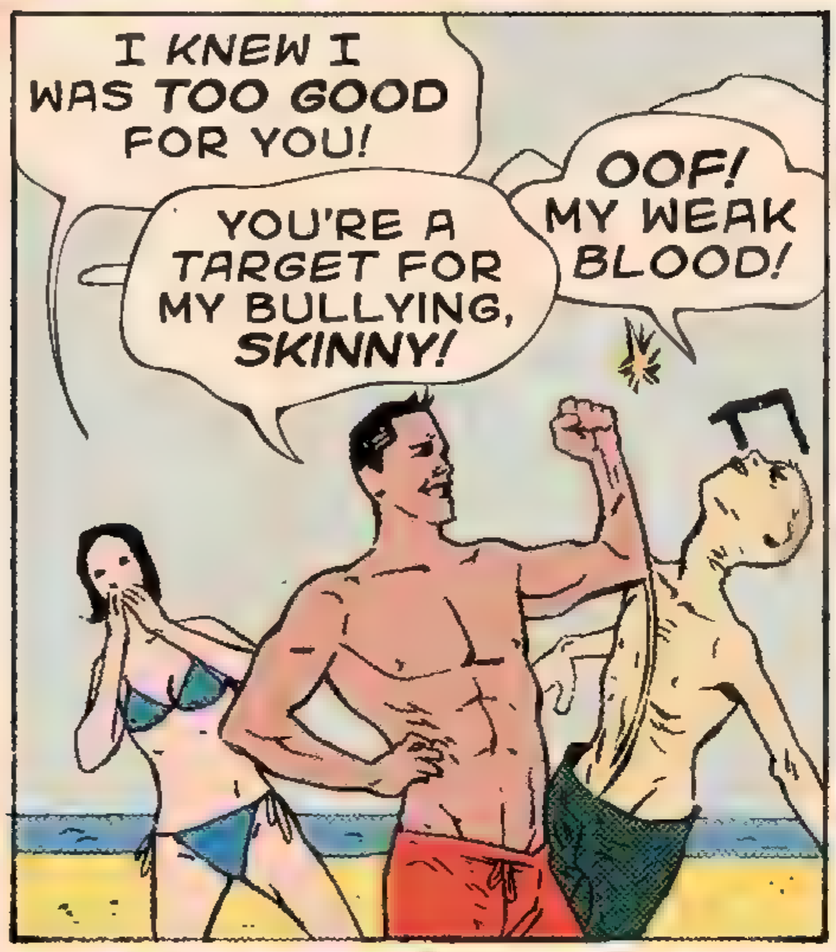
ASK YOUR *PATIENT* ABOUT THE *BLOOD* ON HIS HANDS.
THE BLOOD OF *IRAQI CHILDREN.*

SUNNOVABITCH--
IN A LITTLE WHILE, THE PALE WHITE STRANGER WILL ASK FOR MY NAME.
I'LL TELL HIM: MY NAME IS KARA MURPHY.
I USED TO *SAVE LIVES.*

END.

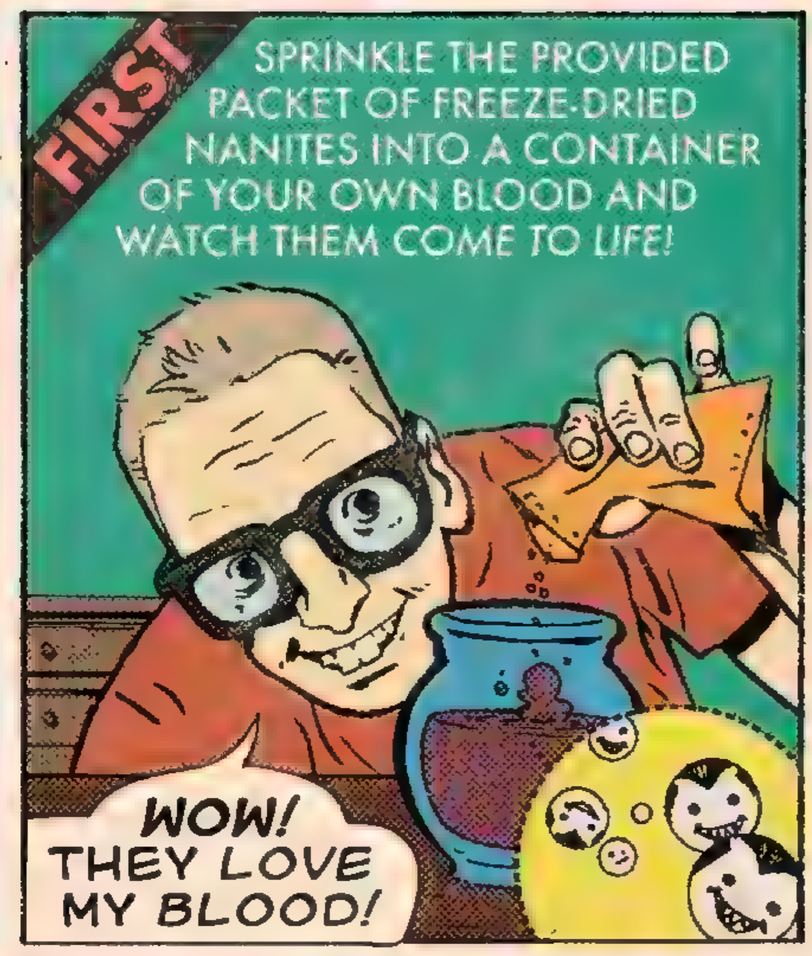
IS THIS YOU?

HEY, WIMPSQUEAK! WANT TO GET PUNCHED?



ARE YOU A 98-POUND WEAKLING?

Always picked last for sports, dances, or paramilitary operations? Don't be a hopeless loser a second longer—order Project Rising Spirit's Bloodshot system! Just send in the free coupon below (with your one-billion dollar handling fee) and wait 4-6 weeks for the system to arrive!



The Project Rising Spirit Bloodshot System™

SEND COMPLETED FORM TO: [redacted]

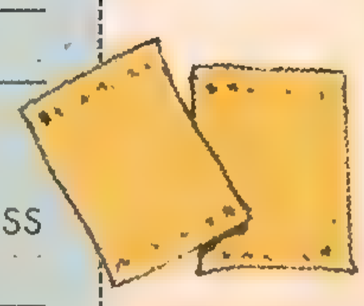
NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

☐ YES! I HAVE INCLUDED MY $1B HANDLING FEE!

☐ YES! I WAIVE ALL RIGHTS TO FREE WILL AND BODILY WELLNESS

SIGNATURE: _____



*Project Rising Spirit is not responsible in the event of instantaneous death and/or global extinction events. Please consume Nanites responsibly.

WRITTEN BY DANIEL KIBBLESMITH **ART BY** JOHNNIE CHRISTMAS **COLORS BY** ALEJANDRO ARBONA **LETTERS/DESIGN BY** DYLAN TODD

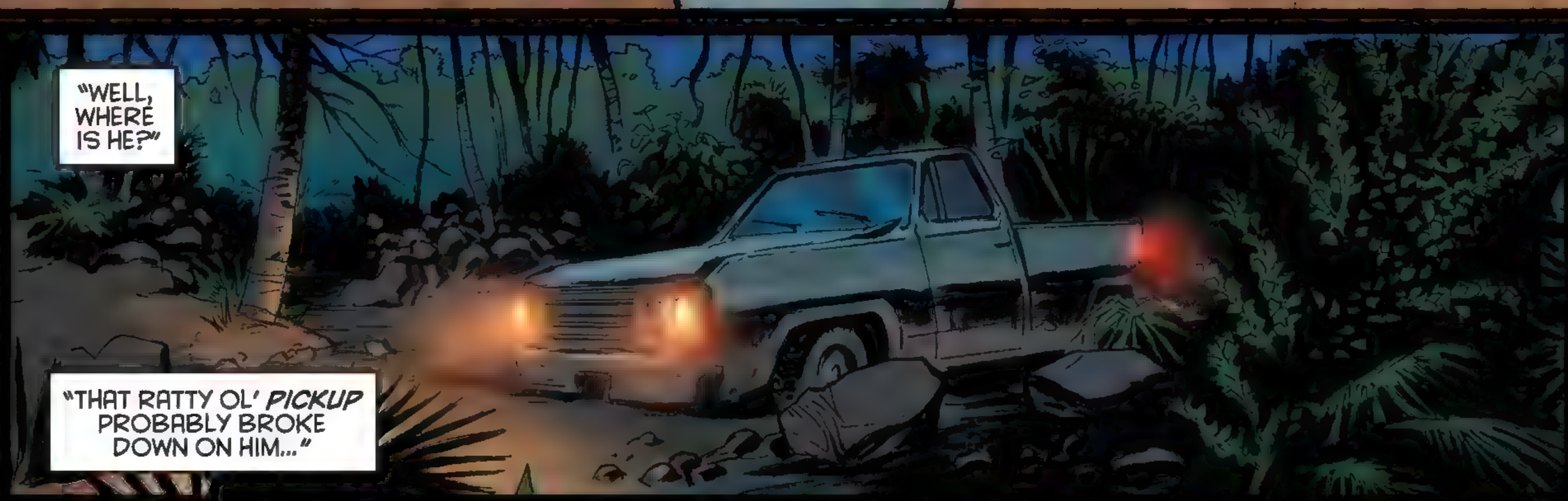
SOMEWHERE ALONG THE MEXICAN-GUATEMALAN BORDER.

I CALLED Y'ALL HERE TONIGHT 'CAUSE WE'VE BEEN LOOKIN' AT THIS *BLOODSHOT* SITUATION ALL WRONG. IT AIN'T A *PROBLEM...*
...IT'S AN *OPPORTUNITY.*

I JUST HAD A FACE-TO-FACE WITH A REP FROM P.R.S.--AND WHAT THESE MEN ARE WILLIN' TO PAY TO GET THEIR PROPERTY BACK--WELL, A FEW OF Y'ALL CAN'T EVEN COUNT THAT HIGH.

SO, A SIMPLE *PROPOSAL...*
...WE CUT THE LONE-WOLF CRAP AND JOIN FORCES TO HUNT THIS BASTARD.
THEN WE *SPLIT* THAT MASSIVE REWARD, SIX WAYS, EQUAL SHARES.

I'M *IN.*
HELL NO. I'M STRICTLY A *SOLO* OPERATOR.
I WON'T HAVE MY METHODS COMPROMISED BY INCOMPETENCE.
INCOMPETENCE?!
I WANNA WAIT 'TIL *RHODES* SHOWS BEFORE WE TAKE THIS ANY FURTHER.


"WELL, WHERE IS HE?"
"THAT RATTY OL' *PICKUP* PROBABLY BROKE DOWN ON HIM..."

MY BIGGEST CONCERN REGARDS *COMPENSATION.*
WHY SHOULD WE ACCEPT AN EVEN SPLIT WHEN *SOME* CONTRIBUTIONS WILL OBVIOUSLY BE *GREATER* THAN OTHERS?

YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, SHOULD FAVOR THE EVEN SPLIT, SMITH!
HOW'S YOUR LAME ASS GONNA HELP US NAB BLOODSHOT?
WITH THIS...
IN ORDER TO TRAP BLOODSHOT, WE HAVE TO IDENTIFY HIM FIRST.
THE NANITES IN HIS BLOODSTREAM GIVE HIM THE ABILITY TO SHAPE-SHIFT. ASSUME THE APPEARANCE OF VIRTUALLY ANYONE...
"HE COULD BE SITTING AROUND THIS TABLE AT THIS VERY MOMENT. POSING AS ONE OF US..."
THIS SENSOR DETECTS HIS PRESENCE.
ALL YOU DO IS FLIP IT ON LIKE SO--AND IF HE WERE CLOSE, WE'D BE ALERTED WITH A--
BEEP-BEEP-BEEEEEEEE
BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
RHODES!
YEAH, SO I'M LATE.
WHAT'S WITH THE ANNOYING NOISE?

BLAM BLAM BLAM

YOU AIN'T *FOOLIN'* NO ONE...*YOU*... YOU...

BLAM

ARGH!

THE HELL'D YOU SHOOT *ME* FOR?

THE HELL'D YOU SHOOT *RHODES* FOR?

THAT *AIN'T* RHODES, YOU DUMB SUNNOVABITCH...

THAT'S *BLOODSHOT!*

BEEE

THAT'S MY BROTHER, YOU DAMN--
BLAM BLAM
BLAM

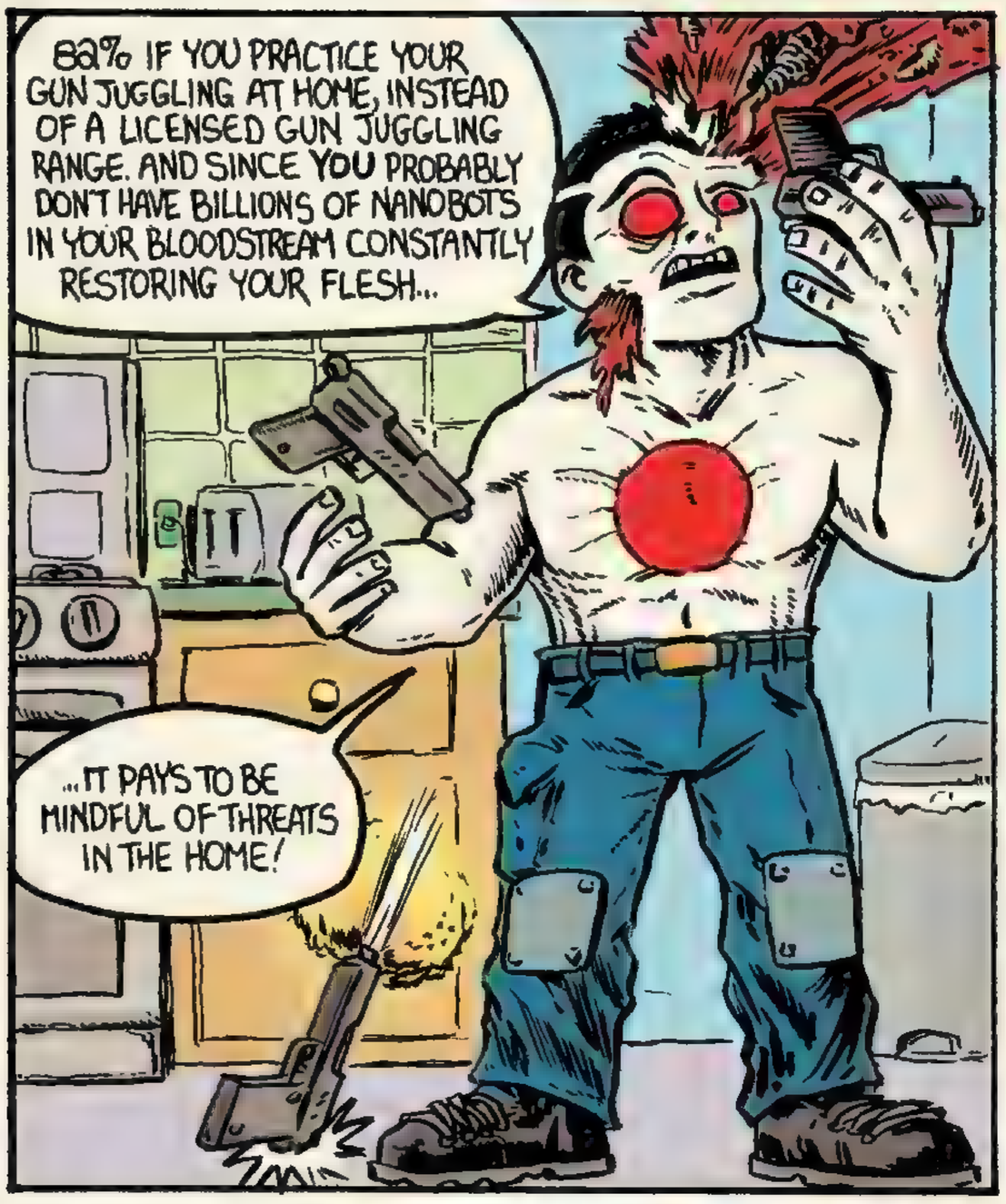
OW... OW... OW...

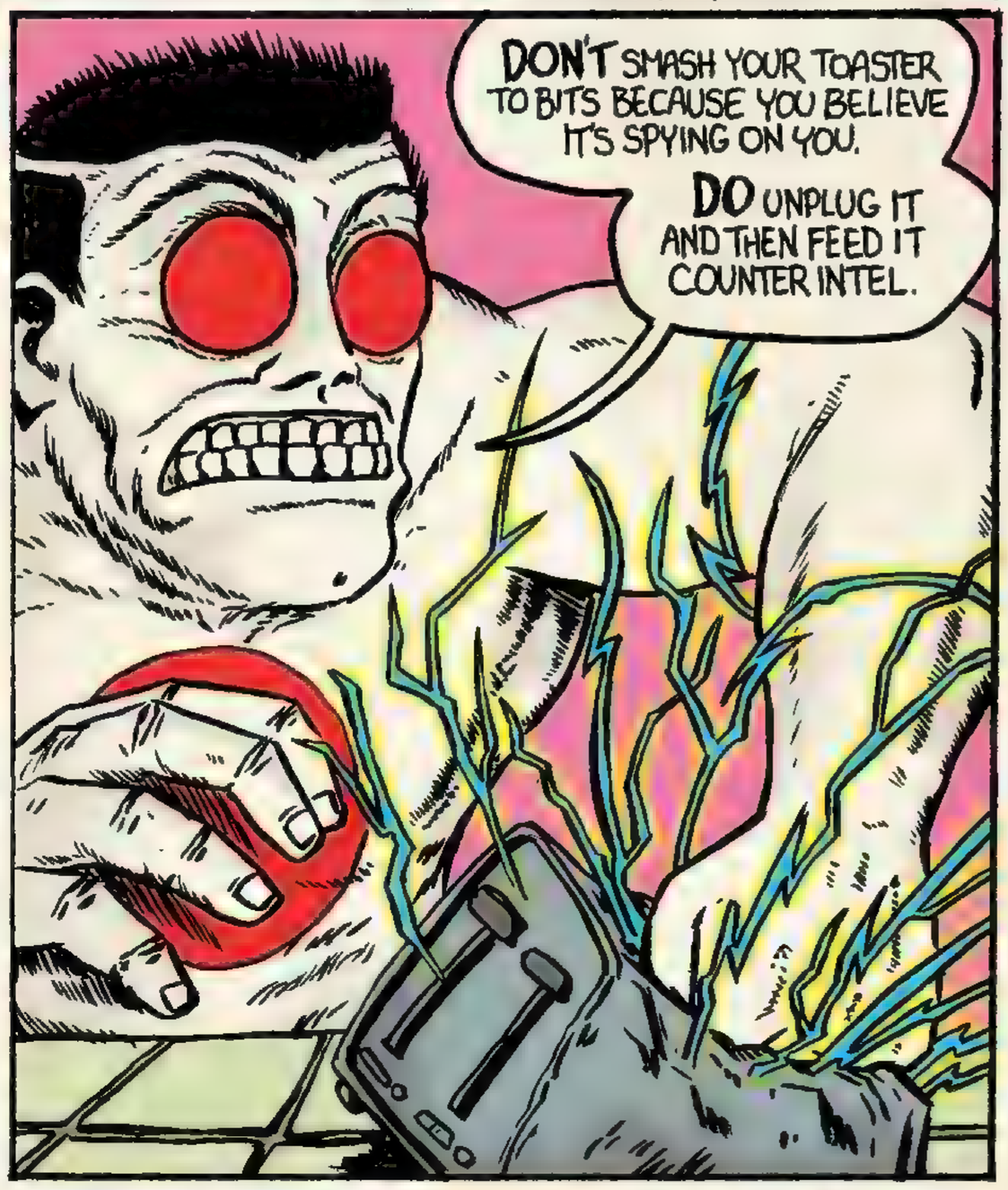
LITTLE GUY WAS RIGHT, YOU KNOW...
...DEVICE WORKS PERFECTLY.

THOUGHT I'D MAKE THINGS SIMPLE, GET YOU ALL IN ONE SPOT...
HAD NO IDEA YOU'D BE DOING ALL THE WORK FOR ME.
BLAM
END.

BLOODSHOT'S GUIDE TO... HOME SAFETY!

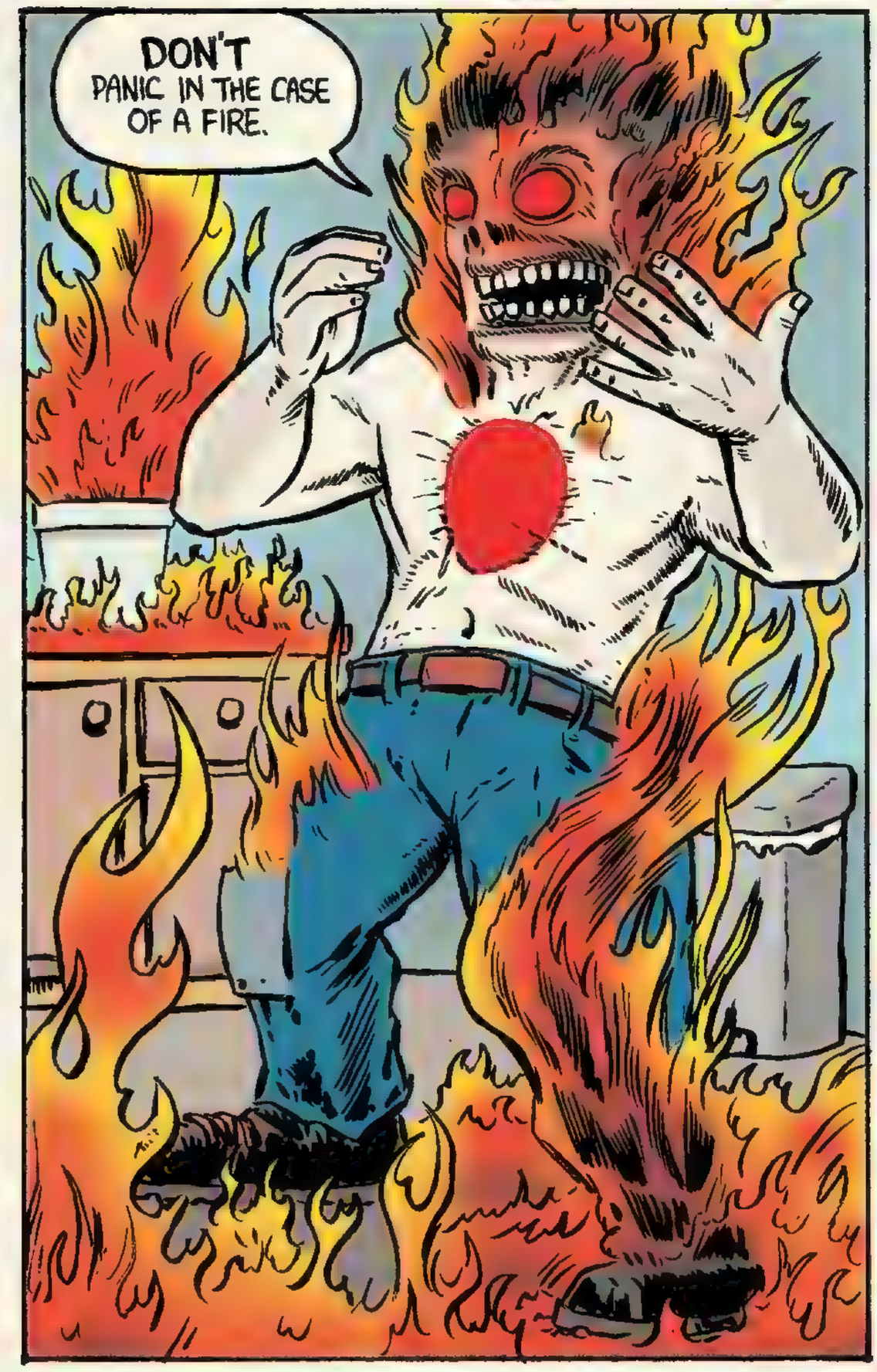
WORDS: JUSTIN JORDAN
PICTURES: RAFER ROBERTS





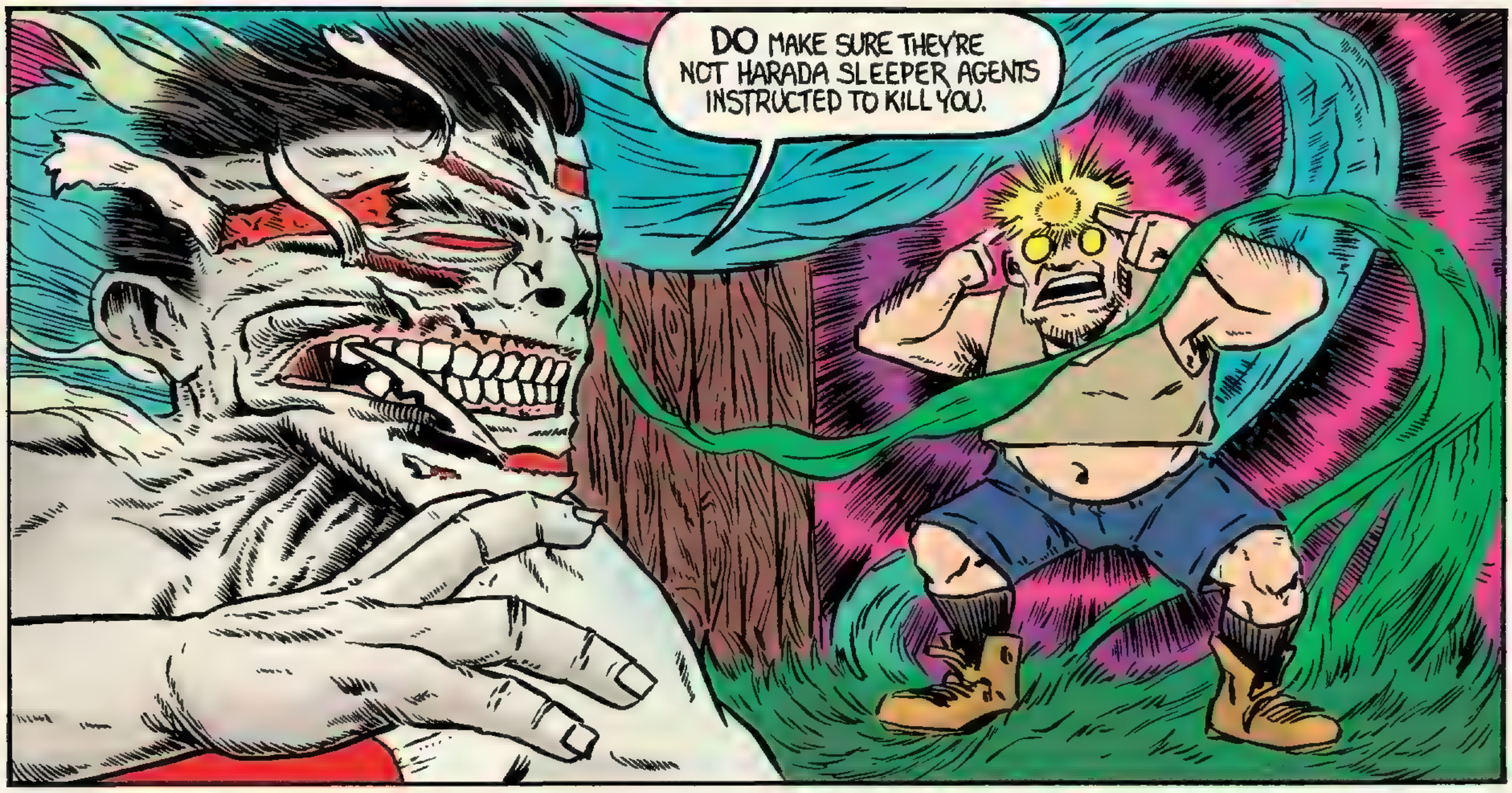
DON'T COMBINE HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS WITHOUT READING THE LABELS.
DO NOT MIX WITH ANYTHING.
BLEACH
PAINT THINNER
WARNING
POISON
10W40 MOTOR OIL

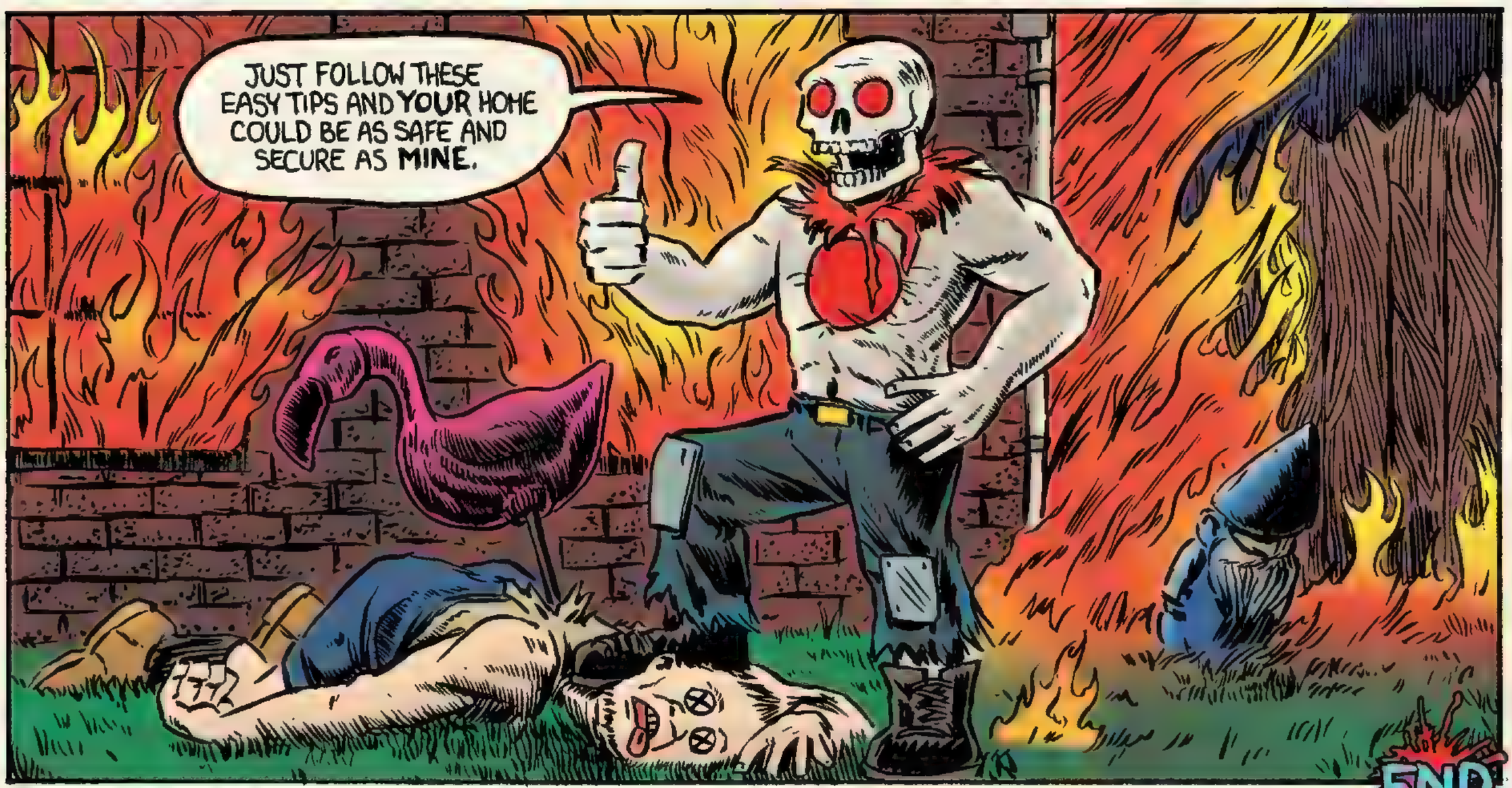
DO MAKE SURE THAT YOU CAN HOLD YOUR BREATH FOR AT LEAST SEVEN MINUTES.
10W40 MOTOR OIL


DON'T PANIC IN THE CASE OF A FIRE.

DO KNOW YOUR EXITS.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS SO YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO TURN TO IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.


DO MAKE SURE THEY'RE NOT HARADA SLEEPER AGENTS INSTRUCTED TO KILL YOU.


JUST FOLLOW THESE EASY TIPS AND YOUR HOME COULD BE AS SAFE AND SECURE AS MINE.
END

THINK YOU'RE A BAD ENOUGH #&$%* TO TAKE HIM ON? TAKE YOUR BEST "SHOT."

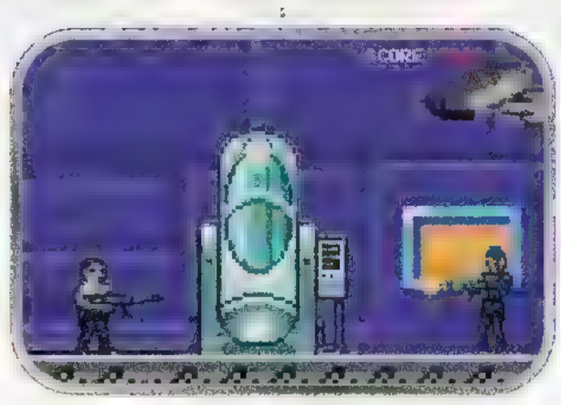
Meet Bloodshot. He's rude, crude and full of 'tude. The baddest S.O.B. 1992 has to offer. Think you're a real enough dude to handle him? Here's your chance to prove it... to the max.

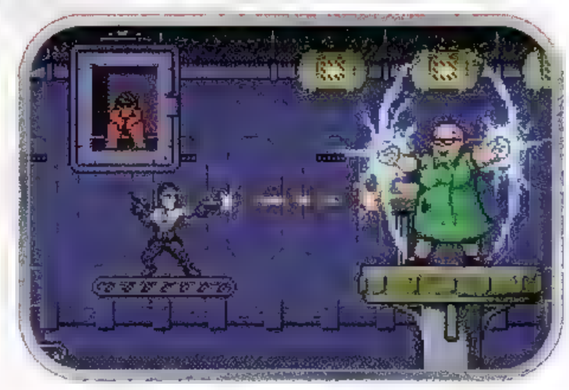
Bloodshot eats raw meat and packs raw heat—and thanks to 32 megs, over 32,000 colors, and one unbeatable 16-bit system he's never looked this good.

Steer Bloodshot through 7 stages of ultra AND mega-tubular side-scrolling action as you hunt down and eliminate the psiot menace and help Project Rising Spirit keep America safe for Truth, Justice, and Attitude.

This ain't your grandma's game cartridge. In fact, your grandma died just from looking at this ad. And she's starting to stink and bloat up with different maggots and gases... to the max.

It took a billion dollars to make him. It'll take an army to stop him.
It's Time to Take The 'Shot™... If you've got the guts.





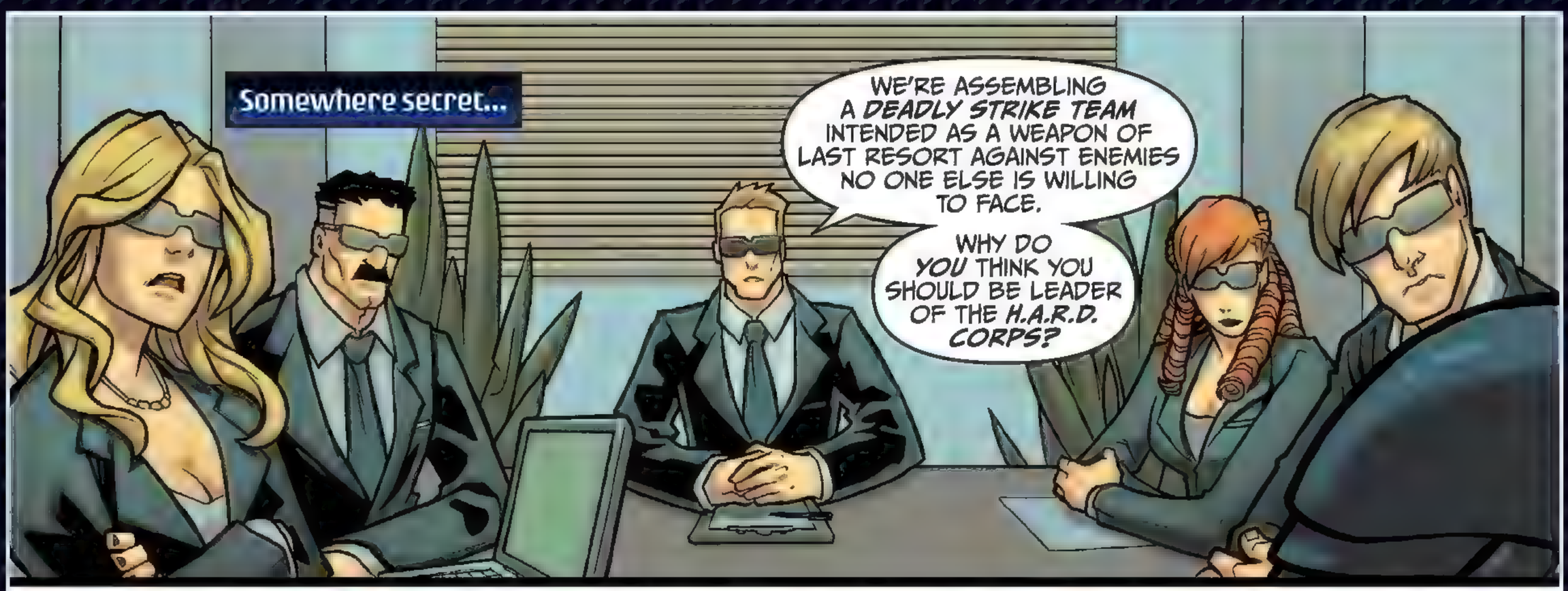
AVAILABLE ON PRS™ VIDEO CARTRIDGE AND THE NEW HANDHELD PRS™ GOBOY®

Not suitable for adults.

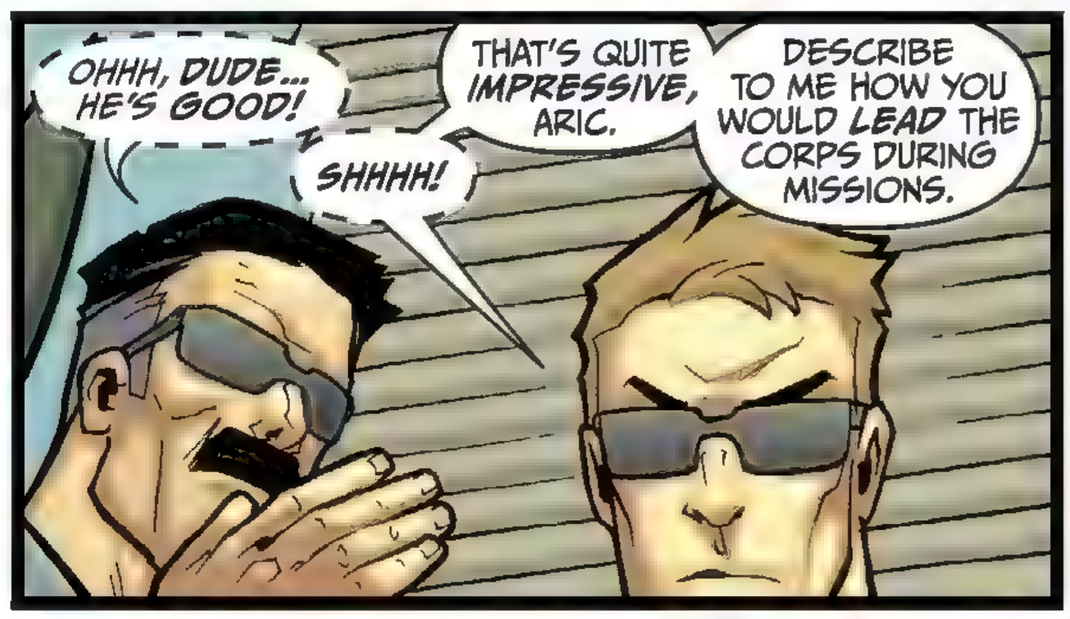
GALLERY

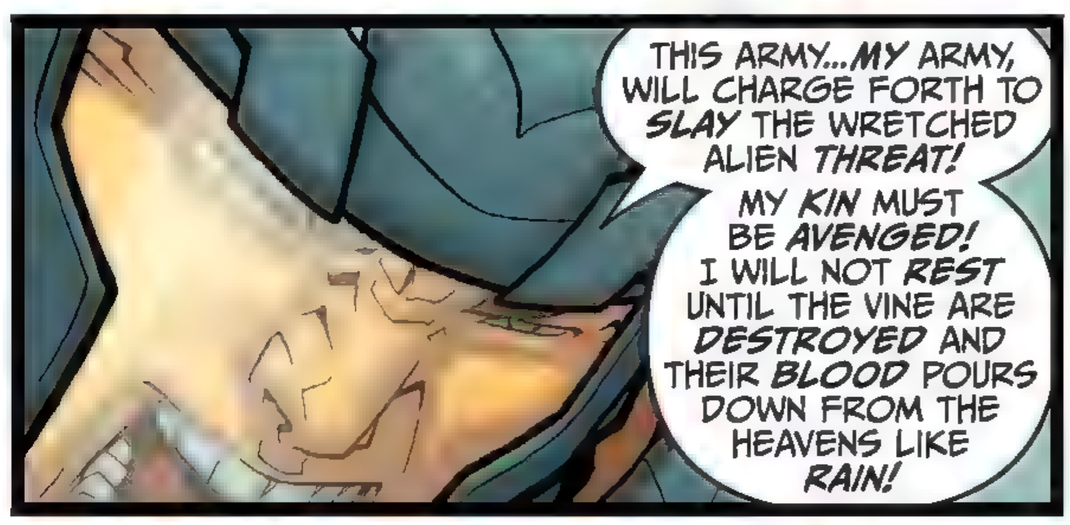
H.A.R.D. CORPS
Costume designs by Clayton Crain

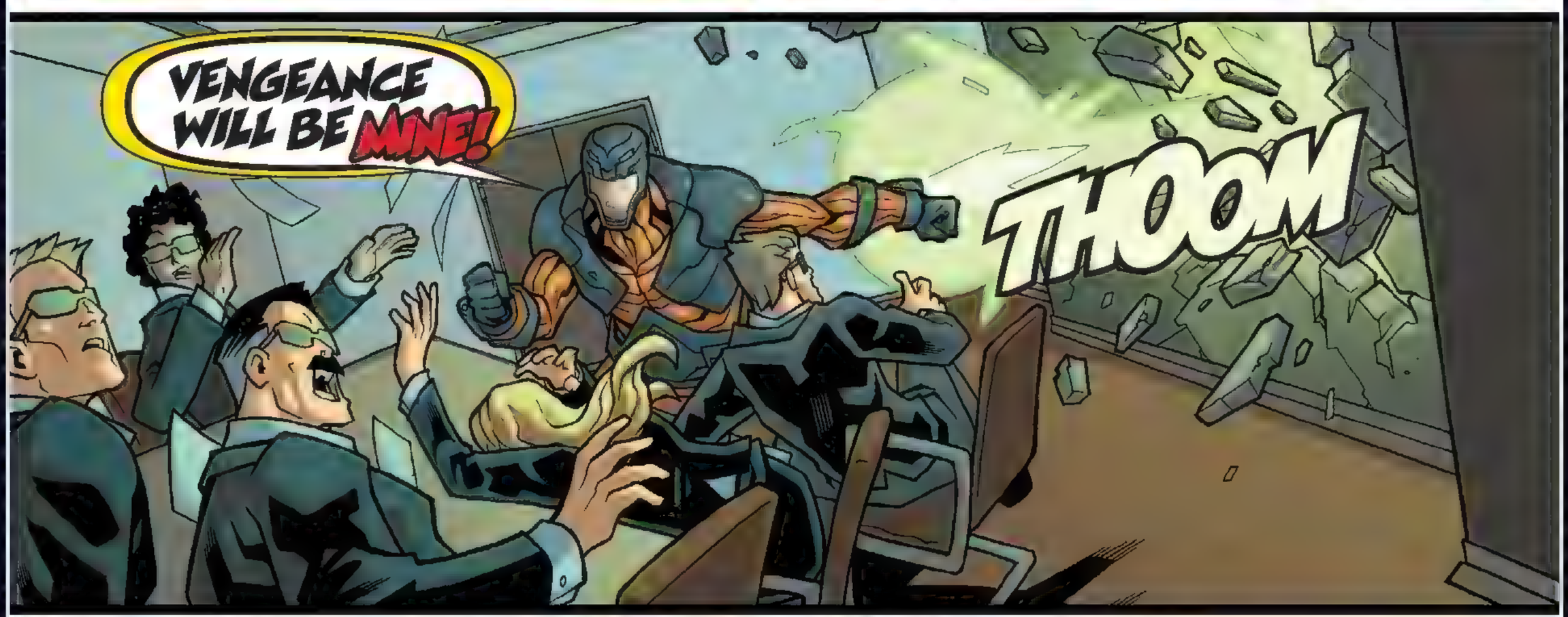
WHO WILL LEAD THE...
H.A.R.D. CORPS?
Writer: Jim Zub
Artist: Edwin Huang
Colorist: Dave McCaig
Letterer: Dave Lanphear
Promotional Art: Manuel Garcia and Stefano Gaudiano


Somewhere secret...
WE'RE ASSEMBLING A DEADLY STRIKE TEAM INTENDED AS A WEAPON OF LAST RESORT AGAINST ENEMIES NO ONE ELSE IS WILLING TO FACE.
WHY DO YOU THINK YOU SHOULD BE LEADER OF THE H.A.R.D. CORPS?

I AM ARIC OF DACIA, HEIR TO THE VISIGOTH THRONE.
I AM A NATURAL LEADER AND WARLORD IMBUED WITH THE POWER OF THIS ALIEN ARMOR.

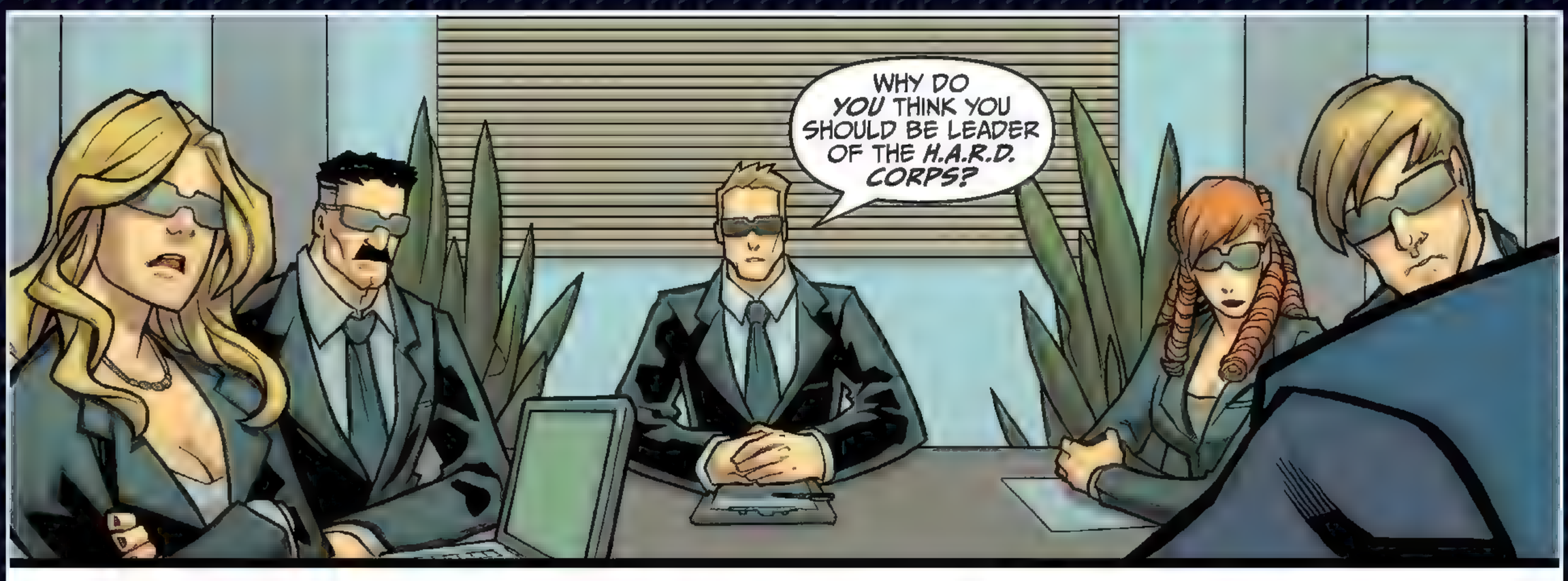

OHHH, DUDE... HE'S GOOD!
SHHHH!
THAT'S QUITE IMPRESSIVE, ARIC.
DESCRIBE TO ME HOW YOU WOULD LEAD THE CORPS DURING MISSIONS.


THIS ARMY...MY ARMY, WILL CHARGE FORTH TO SLAY THE WRETCHED ALIEN THREAT!
MY KIN MUST BE AVENGED! I WILL NOT REST UNTIL THE VINE ARE DESTROYED AND THEIR BLOOD POURS DOWN FROM THE HEAVENS LIKE RAIN!


VENGEANCE WILL BE MINE!
THOOM

WHAT SAY YOU, SNIVELING WHELPS?!
RIGHT THEN...
WE'LL GIVE YOU A CALL IF YOU MAKE IT TO THE SECOND INTERVIEW PHASE...
NEXT!

WHY DO YOU THINK YOU SHOULD BE LEADER OF THE H.A.R.D. CORPS?
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A LEADER, I'M YOUR MAN.
I'VE GOT MILITARY TRAINING, SECURITY TRAINING...
...ALL KINDS OF TRAINING.
SO MUCH TRAINING.
DEPENDABLE, ORGANIZED, COOL UNDER PRESSURE... ME.
OKAY...
I'LL PROVE MYSELF! I'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES!
I'LL EAT BROKEN GLASS FOR YOU GUYS. JUST SAY THE WORD!
SECURITY!
I'LL WORK WEEKENDS! I HAVE IMPECCABLE HANDWRITING!
THANK YOU, GOOD DAY!
SEND IN THE NEXT APPLICANT!
WELCOME! PLEASE HAVE A SEAT, SIR.


WHY DO YOU THINK YOU SHOULD BE LEADER OF THE H.A.R.D. CORPS?

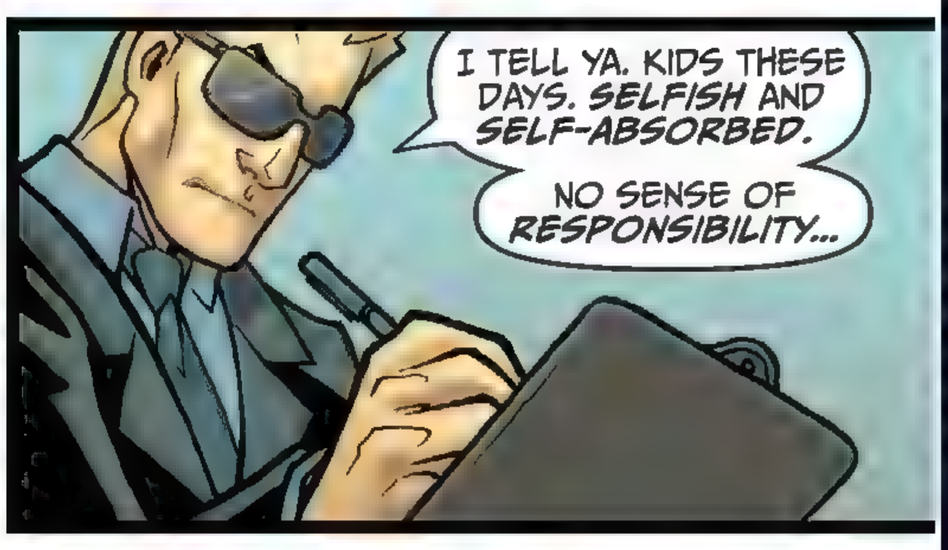
WHY?
SIMPLE.
BECAUSE I'M THE PERFECT CANDIDATE.

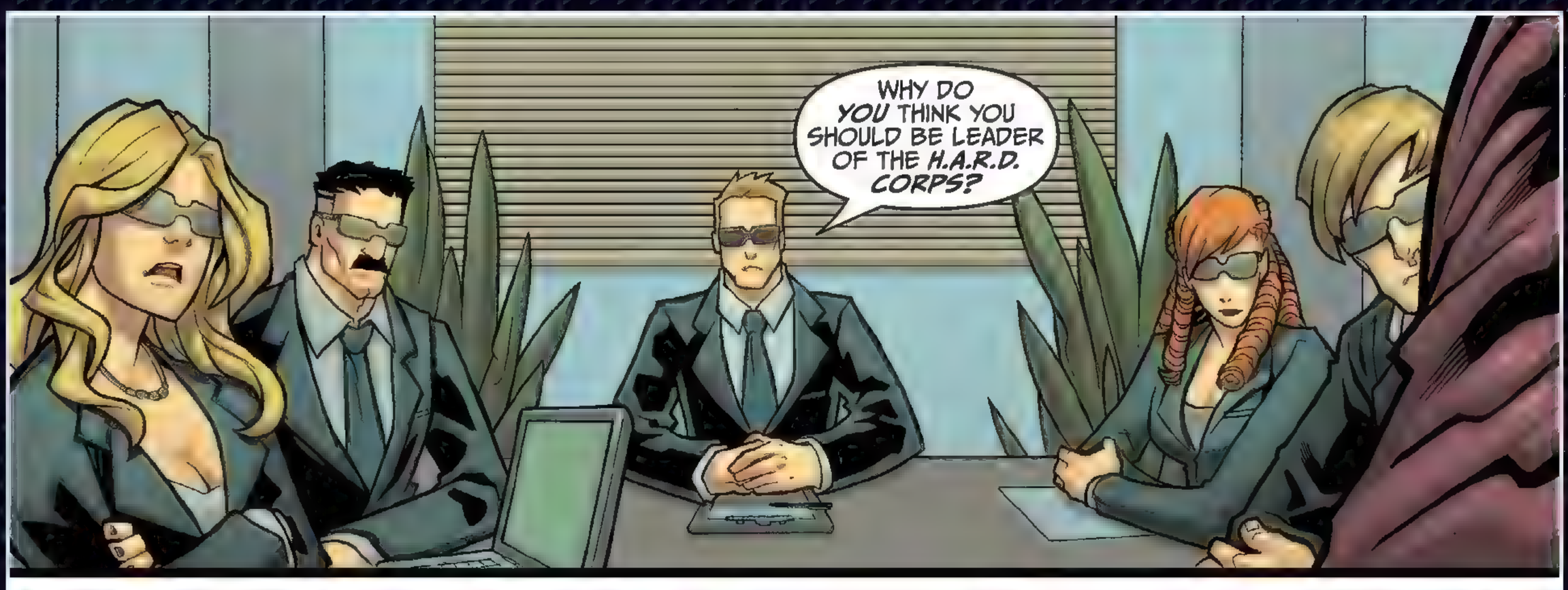
SAY IT.
YOU ARE THE PERFECT CANDIDATE...

NOW, WHILE YOU'RE WAITING OBEDIENTLY FOR MY NEXT PSYCHIC COMMAND, I'LL JUST DIG AROUND IN YOUR BRAINS FOR INFO AND GRAB YOUR PAPERS TO SEE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT ME AND MY FRIENDS.

THANKS, JACKASSES.
I WAS NEVER HERE...

Moments later...
PETER'S LATE! SO UNPROFESSIONAL.


I TELL YA. KIDS THESE DAYS. SELFISH AND SELF-ABSORBED.
NO SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY...


WHY DO YOU THINK YOU SHOULD BE LEADER OF THE H.A.R.D. CORPS?

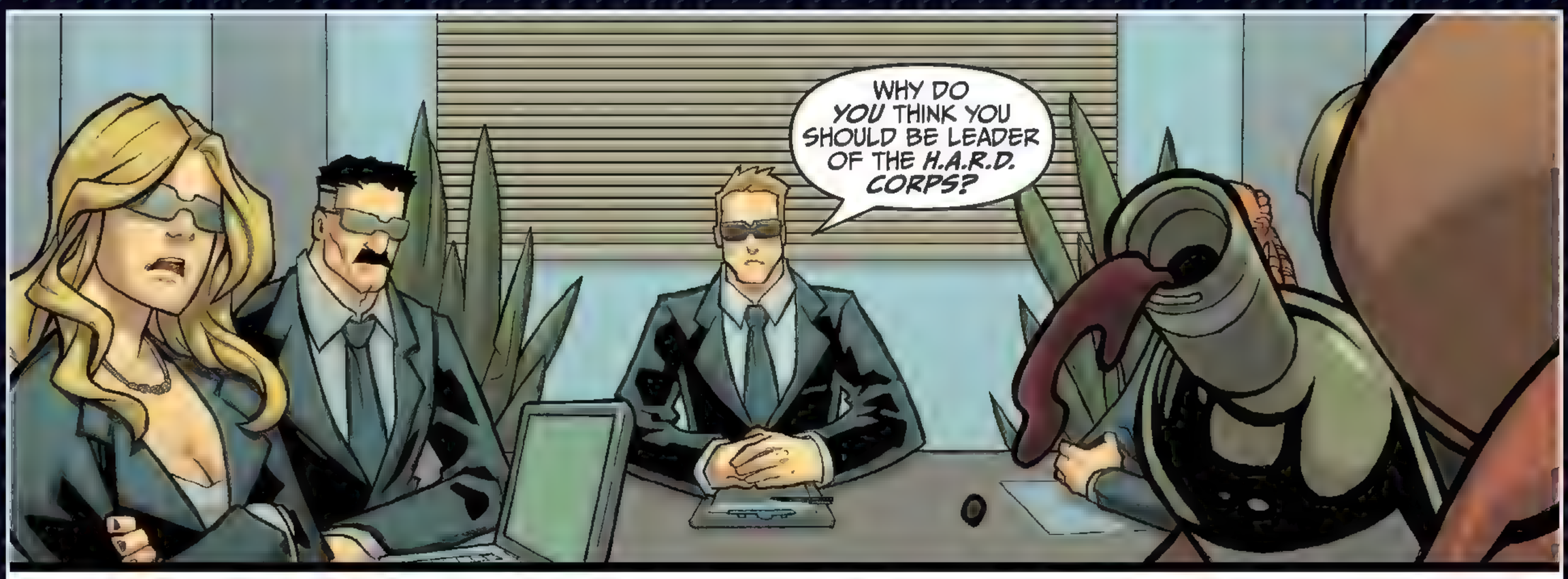
I AM MASTER DARQUE. IT'S IN THE NAME... "MASTER".
IN CHARGE...
DOMINATING...
THE BOSS...

IT'S A GREAT NAME. VERY LEADER-LIKE.
WHAT OTHER QUALIFICATIONS DO YOU HAVE?

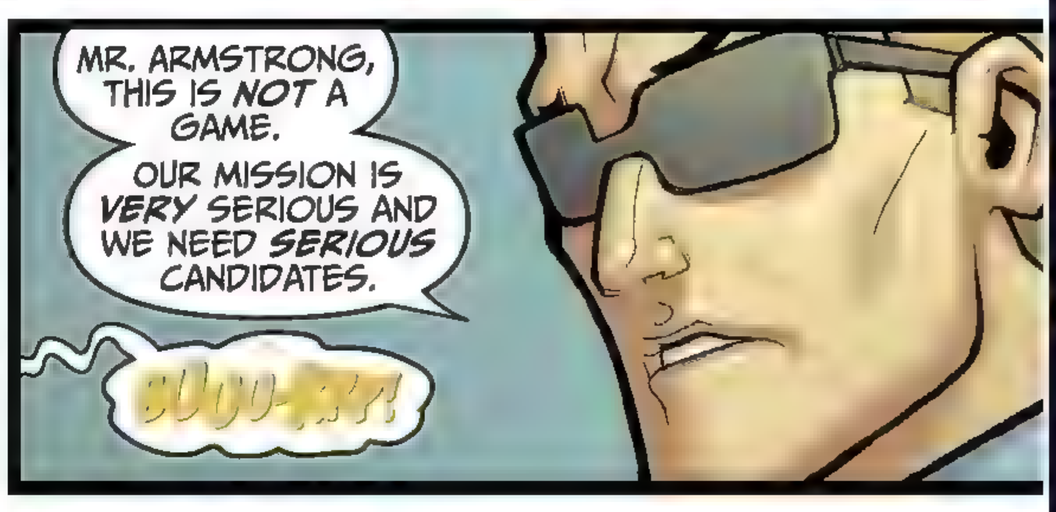
HOW ABOUT THIS--IF YOU DON'T GIVE ME THE JOB, I'LL FEED YOUR PITIFUL SOULS TO CREATURES FROM THE DEADSIDE.

BUT, MISTER DARQUE...
WE'RE BUREAUCRATS.
WE HAVE NO SOULS.

mumblegrumblecurse
NEXT!


WHY DO *YOU* THINK YOU SHOULD BE LEADER OF THE *H.A.R.D. CORPS?*

SN'UH?
LEA-WHA--?
WHO'RE Y'PEEBLE?
WAZZZ GOIN' ON?


MR. ARMSTRONG, THIS IS *NOT* A GAME.
OUR MISSION IS *VERY* SERIOUS AND WE NEED *SERIOUS* CANDIDATES.

THEY CALL ME HANGIN' JOHNNY, AWAY-I-OH... THEY CALL ME HANGIN' JOHNNY, SO HANG, BOYS, HANG!

FIRST I HUNG M'MOTHER, AWAY-I-OH... THEN I HUNG M'BROTHER,

SO HANG, BOYS, HA-AAAUUUU!
BARF

WHY DO YOU THINK YOU SHOULD BE LEADER OF THE H.A.R.D. CORPS?
UH... BLOODSHOT?
DID YOU HEAR THE QUESTION?
RATATATATATATATATATAT
THAT'S WHY.
YOU'RE HIRED!
Fin.

BLOODSHOT #0 GATEFOLD VARIANT COVER
Art by EMANUELA LUPACCHINO

BLOODSHOT #0
PAGE FIFTEEN (seven panels)

(Note: Dialogue is often revised between the script and the final, lettered pages.)

PANEL 1: Small black panel.

PANEL 2: Small panel - but now we see a red circle - but cropped in tight - so we can't tell it's a circle quite yet - we can just see the curved top and bottom edges of it. [Color note - this should be colored to look like a red setting sun - to mimic the Bloodshot logo.]

1 JOURNAL CAPTION:
I never asked where they found him.

PANEL 3: Pull back from panel 2 so we can see the full red sun now overhead. Beating down. It's hot.

2 JOURNAL CAPTION:
Or the circumstances of his near-death.

PANEL 4: ECU of Jonah's bloody barely-alive eye. It's reflecting the red sun above. He's paralyzed and his eyes are stuck open - burning as they stare up into the sky.

3 JOURNAL CAPTION:
The truth is...

PANEL 5: Pull back from panel 4 so we can see the top half of Jonah - he is torn up. His uniform is mostly gone - ripped to shreds - and he is bloody, cut up, and pale. He has cuts and bruises all over and his face is a mess. Glass is sticking out everywhere in his skin. He's not dead...but he sure wishes he was.

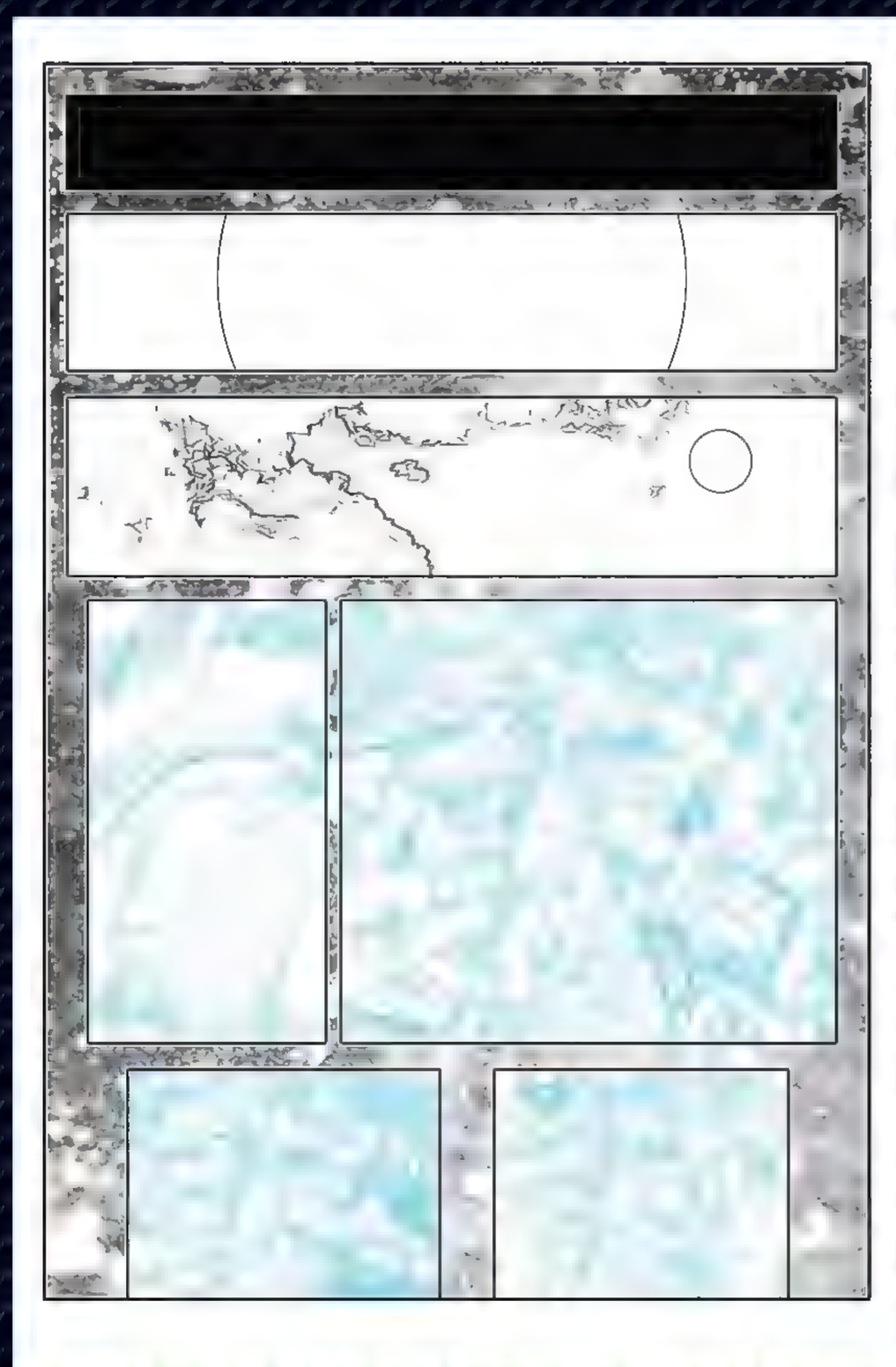
4 JOURNAL CAPTION:
I didn't want to know.

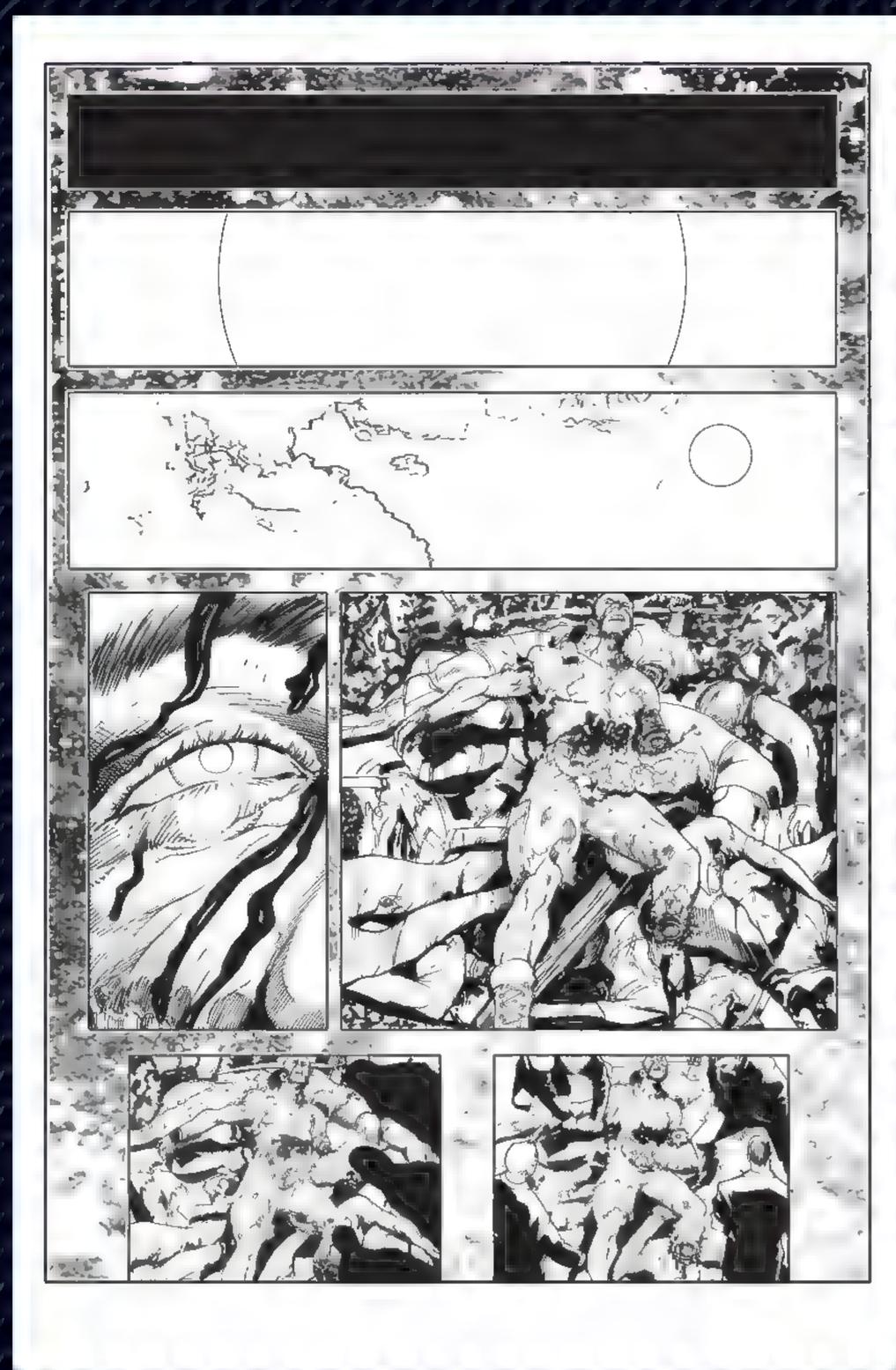
PANEL 6: Pull back even further from panel 5 - still looking down at Jonah as he lies there on a pile of debris and other bodies. The bodies of the other SEAL team members. He's on the city trash heap - they just dumped his mutilated body. We can see now that his guts are out and one of his legs is just completely missing.

There are also shadows - shadows of men stretching over the trash and bodies and Jonah. He's being approached by four men (off-panel).

5 SOLDIER (OFF-PANEL):
Hurry up. Before the locals show up again. And before this poor guy dies. They need him alive.

PANEL 7: Pull back to long view from above. There are 4 U.S. military-looking guys in black. They're reaching down and grabbing Jonah as if to pick him up.





BLOODSHOT #0, p.15
Written by MATT KINDT
Art by CHRISCROSS
Color by MOOSE BAUMANN

BLOODSHOT #0
PAGE SIXTEEN (six panels)

PANEL 1: Tall panel that stretches to the top and bottom of the page. We see Jonah now in Rees's science lab. He's in his nanite bathtub. He's in a thick liquid but we can still make him out clearly through the bubbles and nanite clouds. Staring straight up at us just like he was on the trash heap on page 15. But now he's been cleaned up. His arm is missing now and the stump is bandaged. His leg is also bandaged and all of his cuts and bruises are cleaned up. He still looks horrible but just a little more cleaned up. We can see small specks covering his body - these are the nanites - crawling all over his body like super-tiny ants. They're going up the trunk of his body towards his neck and head and over his arms...they're swarming.

1 JOURNAL CAPTION:
So after a year of re-programming. The nanites had their moment of truth.

PANEL 2: Profile CU of Jonah as he lies there in the bath - his eyes are still open and they are dark - he's still alive. The nanites are climbing up into his nose and over and into his eyes as he stares straight up.

2 JOURNAL CAPTION:
As the man died in front of me...

PANEL 3: Repeat shot of panel 2, but now the light has gone out of Jonah's eyes - they look pale. He's just died. The nanites are still pouring into his body through his nose and mouth and eyes.

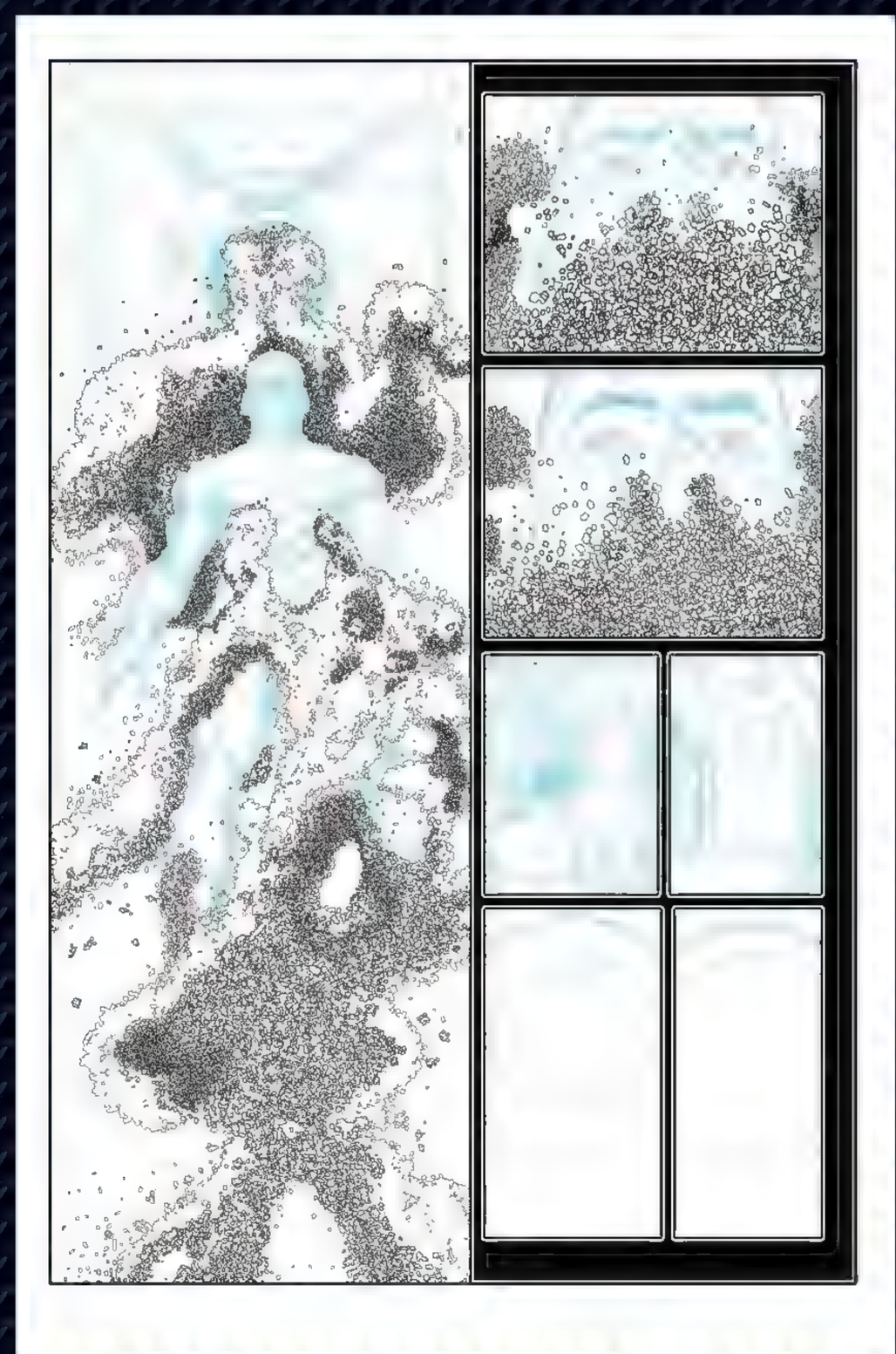
3 JOURNAL CAPTION:
The nanites went about completing their new mission. Not to repair. But to collect. And collect they did.

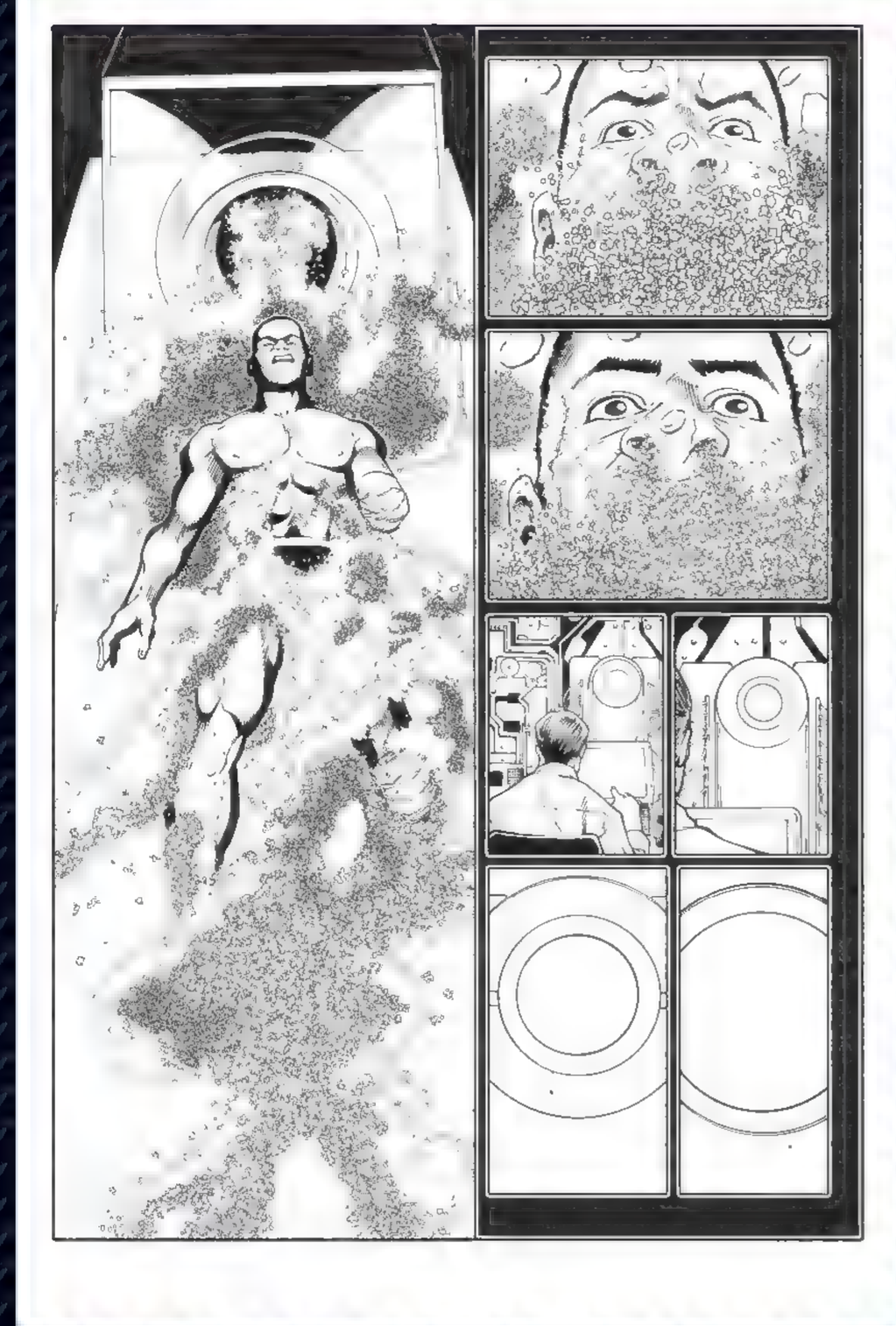
PANEL 4: Medium shot of Rees looking at and typing on a laptop. Behind him we can see wires and cables from the laptop heading back to a white/silver disc on the wall - mounted into a computer bank. This white disc should be the size of the one on Bloodshot's chest. This will end up being the circle on his chest.

4 JOURNAL CAPTION: It happened before my eyes.

PANEL 5: Move in closer to the white circle - Rees starts to be cropped out here and off panel as we focus on the disc. It's starting to fill up - to turn a little pinkish - beginning to fill red.

PANEL 6: Closer on the disc now and it is completely solid red.





BLOODSHOT #0, p.16
Written by MATT KINDT
Art by CHRISCROSS
Color by MOOSE BAUMANN

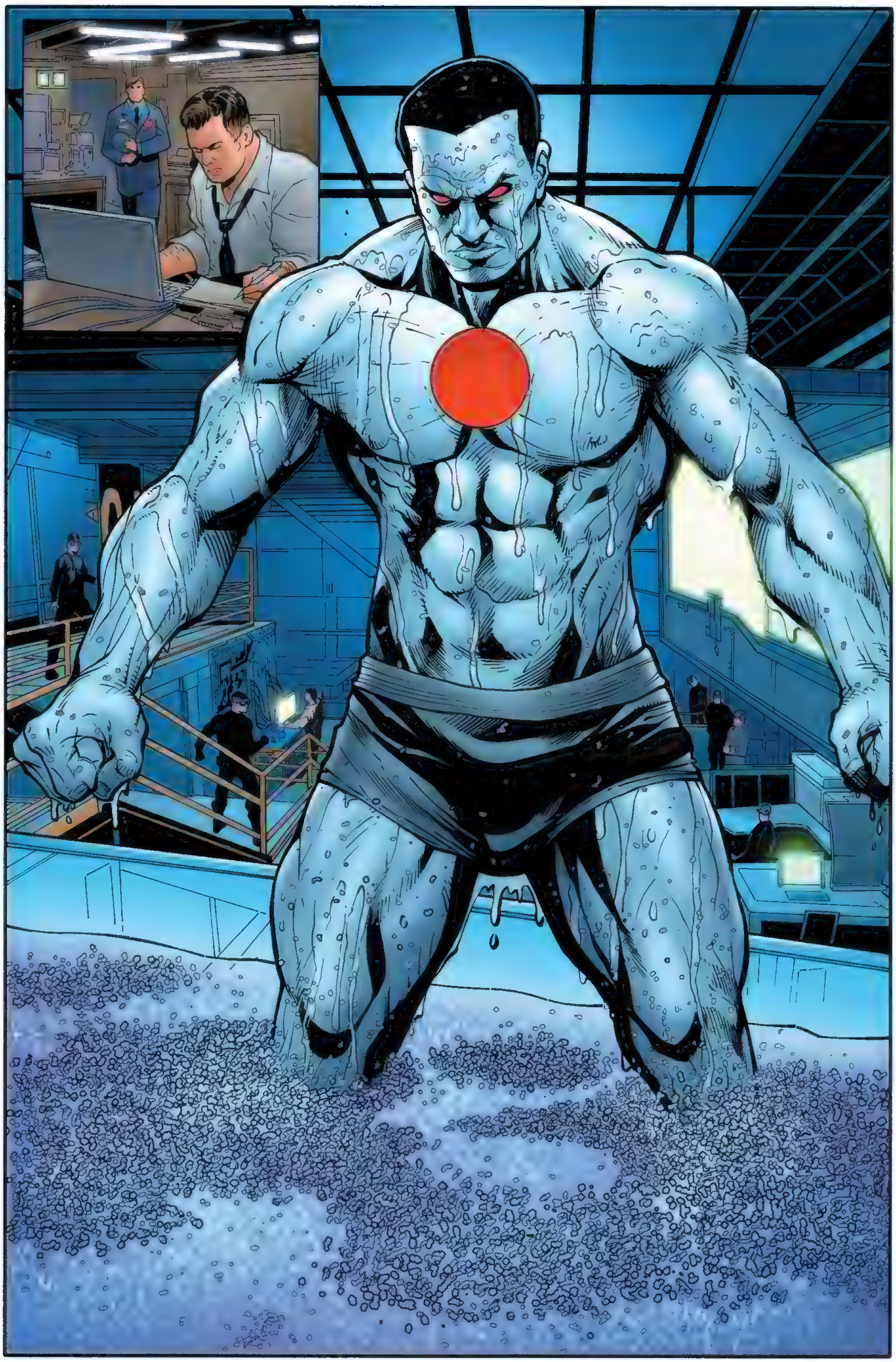
BLOODSHOT #0
PAGE SEVENTEEN (splash page)

SPLASH: Rees is sitting at his desk in front of his computer on the left side of the page. Small in the background is the door to his office and a military General standing in the doorway. On the right side of the page - big and looming over the entire scene and Rees, is Bloodshot. He is standing up in his coffin-like nanite bath. Water and nanites are dripping off of him and his red disc is glowing slightly. He shows no emotion. He is Bloodshot. The Bloodshot as we know him today - muscles rippling as he pulls himself out of the bath.

This shot should look dark and shadowy and foreboding. Bloodshot is a scary dude. Even to the guys that are running him.

1 GENERAL:
Are you finished? Has he grown his conscience?

BLOODSHOT #0, p.17
Written by MATT KINDT
Art by CHRISCROSS
Color by MOOSE BAUMANN



BLOODSHOT #0
PAGE EIGHTEEN (five panels)

PANEL 1: Small journal-page panel. Lined paper with a handwriting font.

1 JOURNAL CAPTION:
I told the General "yes" of course. But I didn't really know. Only time would tell. Will a soul make a difference? Have I fixed Bloodshot? Or have I damned a man whose name I never knew to an eternal living hell?

PANEL 2: Close-up of Bloodshot fighting a security guard. The guard has Bloodshot in a headlock from behind. Bloodshot is taking a .45-caliber 1911 and pointing it through his own mouth and pulling the trigger - the bullet is flying through Bloodshot's mouth and out the back of his head and into the ninja's head.

2 JOURNAL CAPTION:
I have a feeling I'll never know.

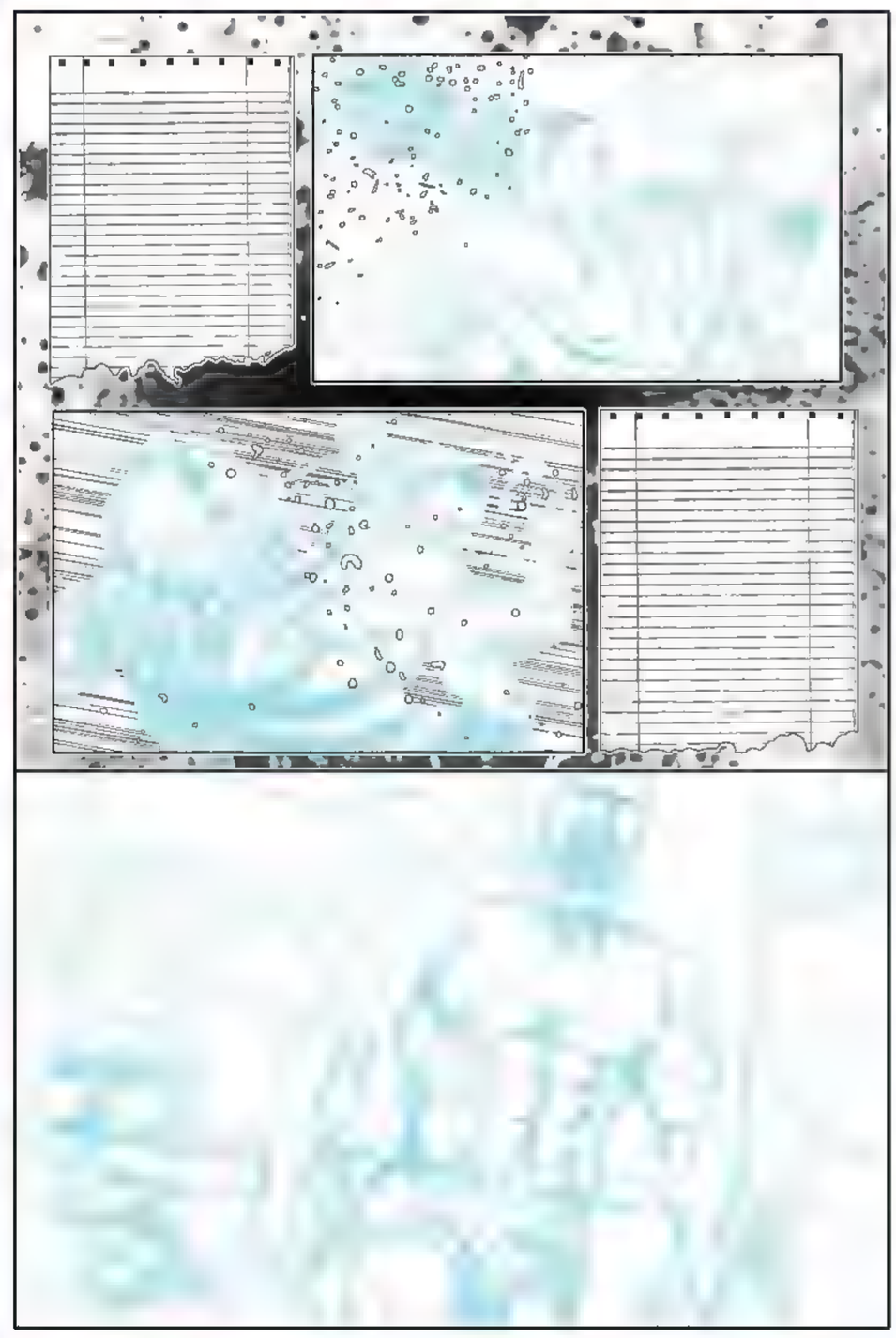
PANEL 3: CU of Bloodshot punching a Special Ops guy in the face - the Ops guy is wearing (well, he was wearing) night-vision goggles and Bloodshot has just punched them through this guy's face and into his skull.

3 JOURNAL CAPTION:
I'm sure I'll be taken off the job eventually. Paid to remain silent.

PANEL 4: Small journal panel (like panel 1).

4 JOURNAL CAPTION:
And Bloodshot will go about his business. No one the wiser. His controllers...his masters will never know what I tried to do.

PANEL 5: CU of Bloodshot walking towards us. He's a bloody mess. The back of his neck/skull is smoking from where he shot himself and a bunch of his teeth are missing. He's walking towards us and we can see another Special Ops guard-style guy clutching his face, trying to pull the battle knife out of it that Bloodshot just stuck there.

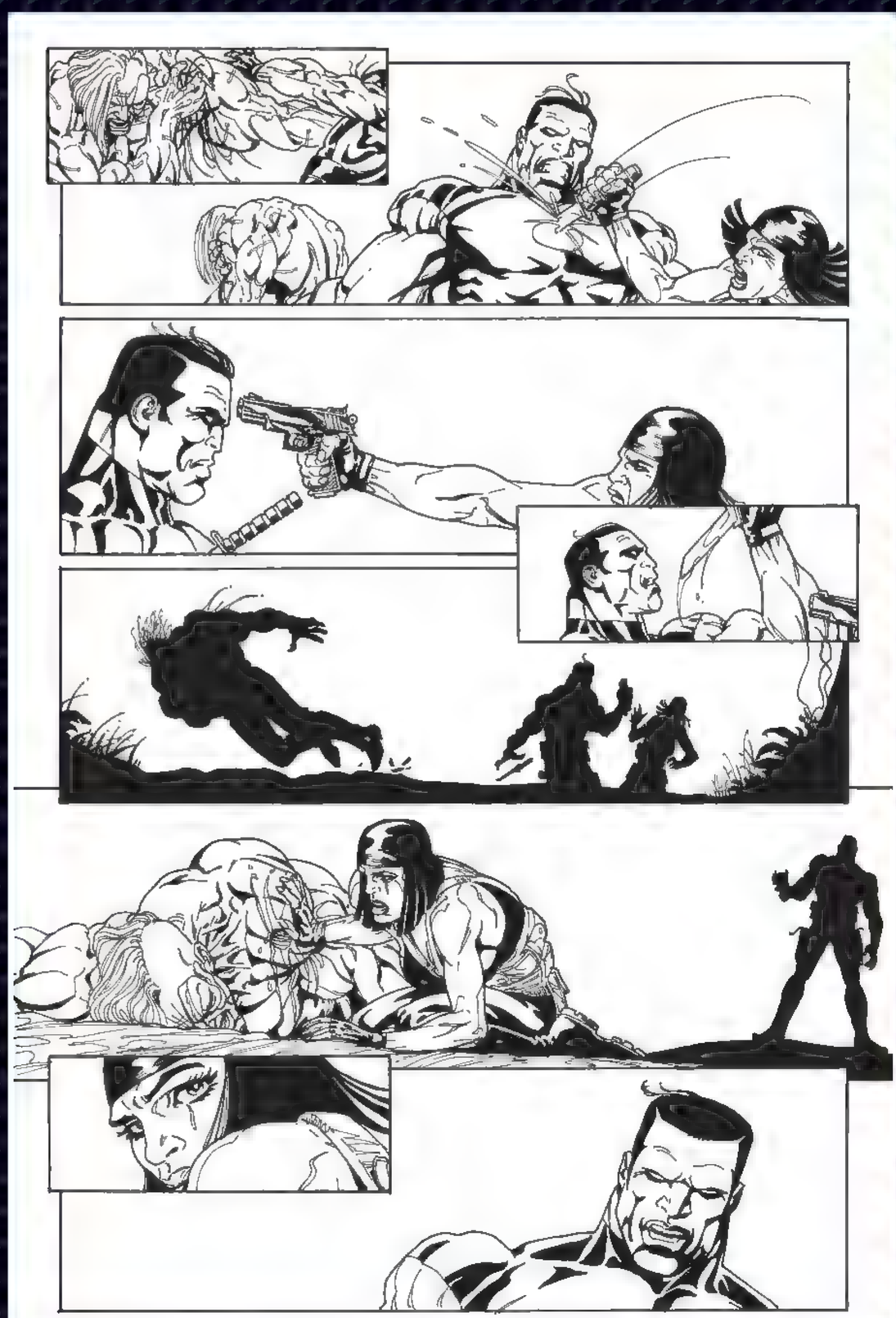


BLOODSHOT #0, p.18
Written by MATT KINDT
Art by CHRISCROSS
Color by MOOSE BAUMANN

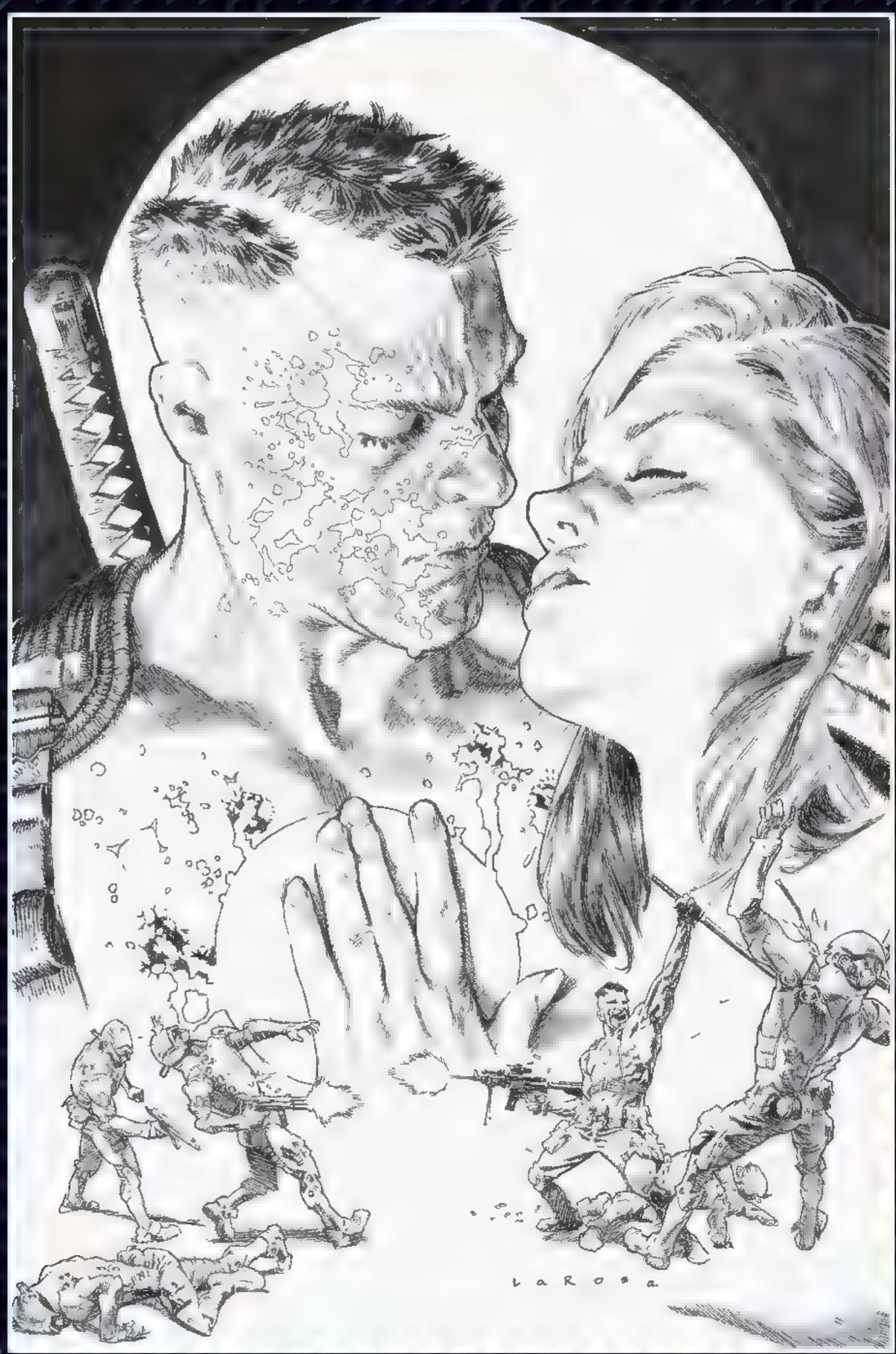
BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #18, PAGES 14-16
Art by BART SEARS

BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #19, PAGES 1-3
Art by BART SEARS

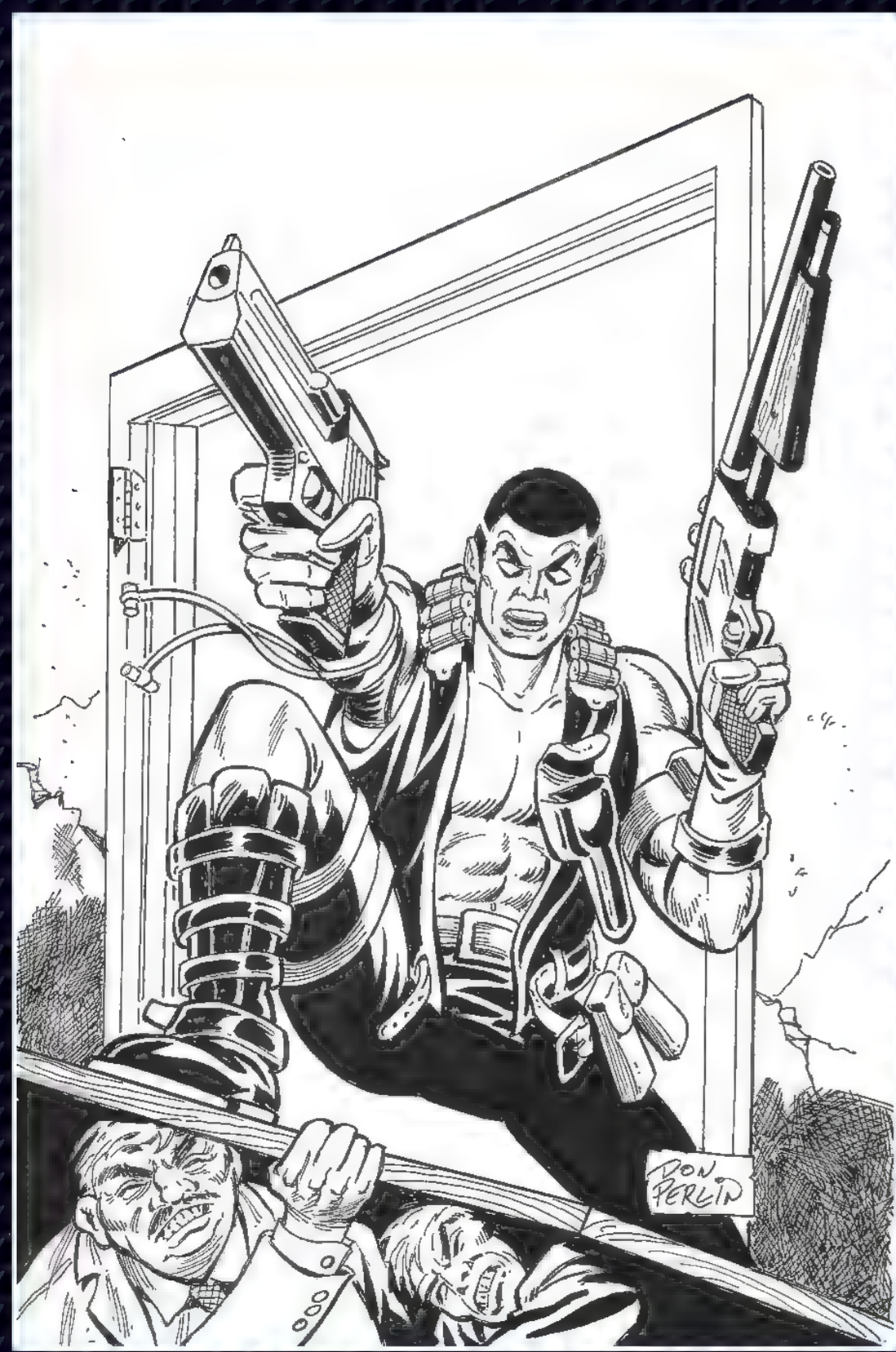
BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #19 VARIANT COVER
Art by BART SEARS



BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #19, PAGES 12-14
Art by BART SEARS



BLOODSHOT #25
Cover art by LEWIS LAROSA



BLOODSHOT #25 THROWBACK VARIANT
Cover art by DON PERLIN

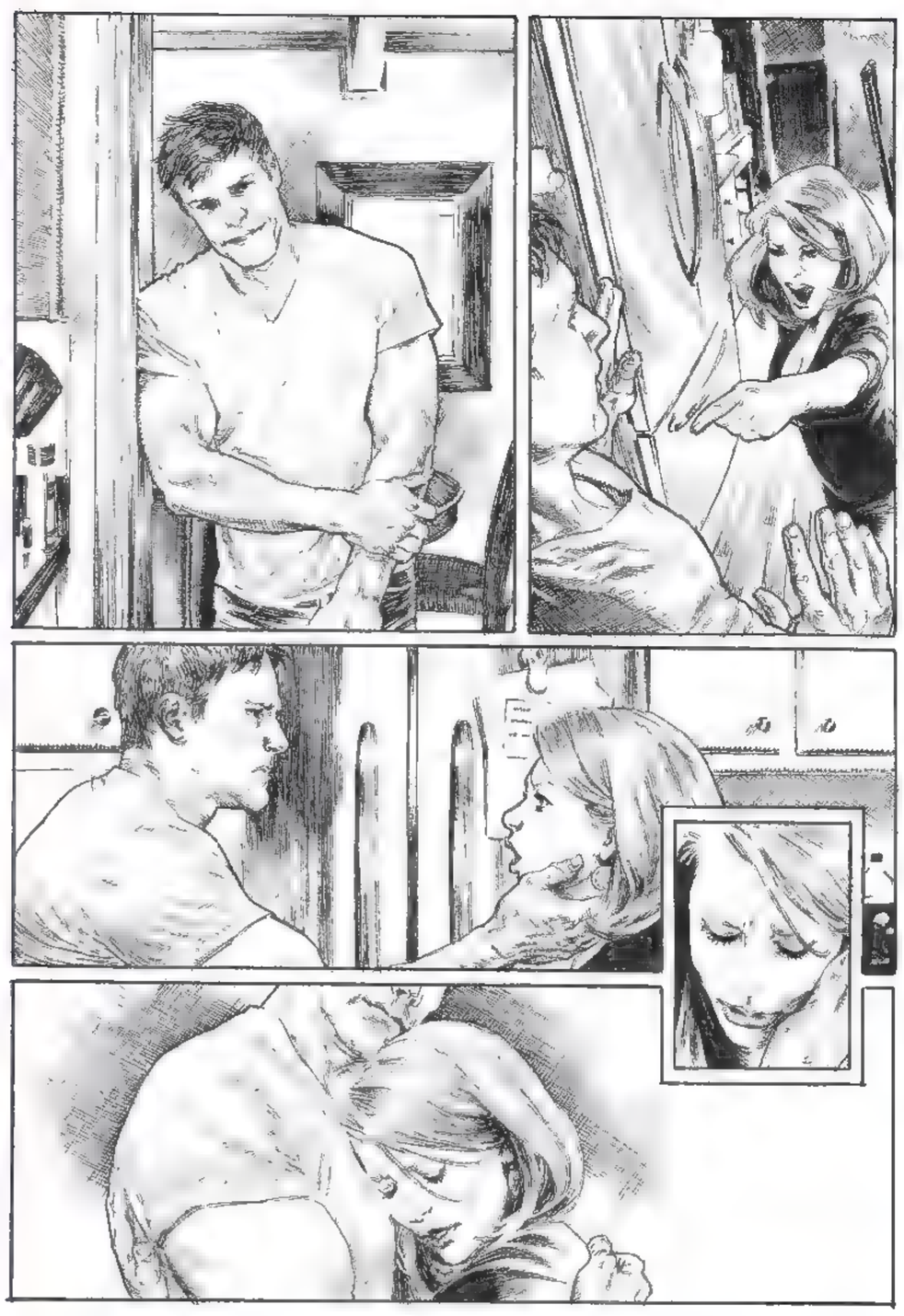
BLOODSHOT #25 COVER B
Art by AL BARRIONUEVO

BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" p.1
Art by LEWIS LAROSA

BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" PAGES 2-3
Art by LEWIS LAROSA

BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" p.4
Art by LEWIS LAROSA

BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" PAGES 5-7
Art by LEWIS LAROSA

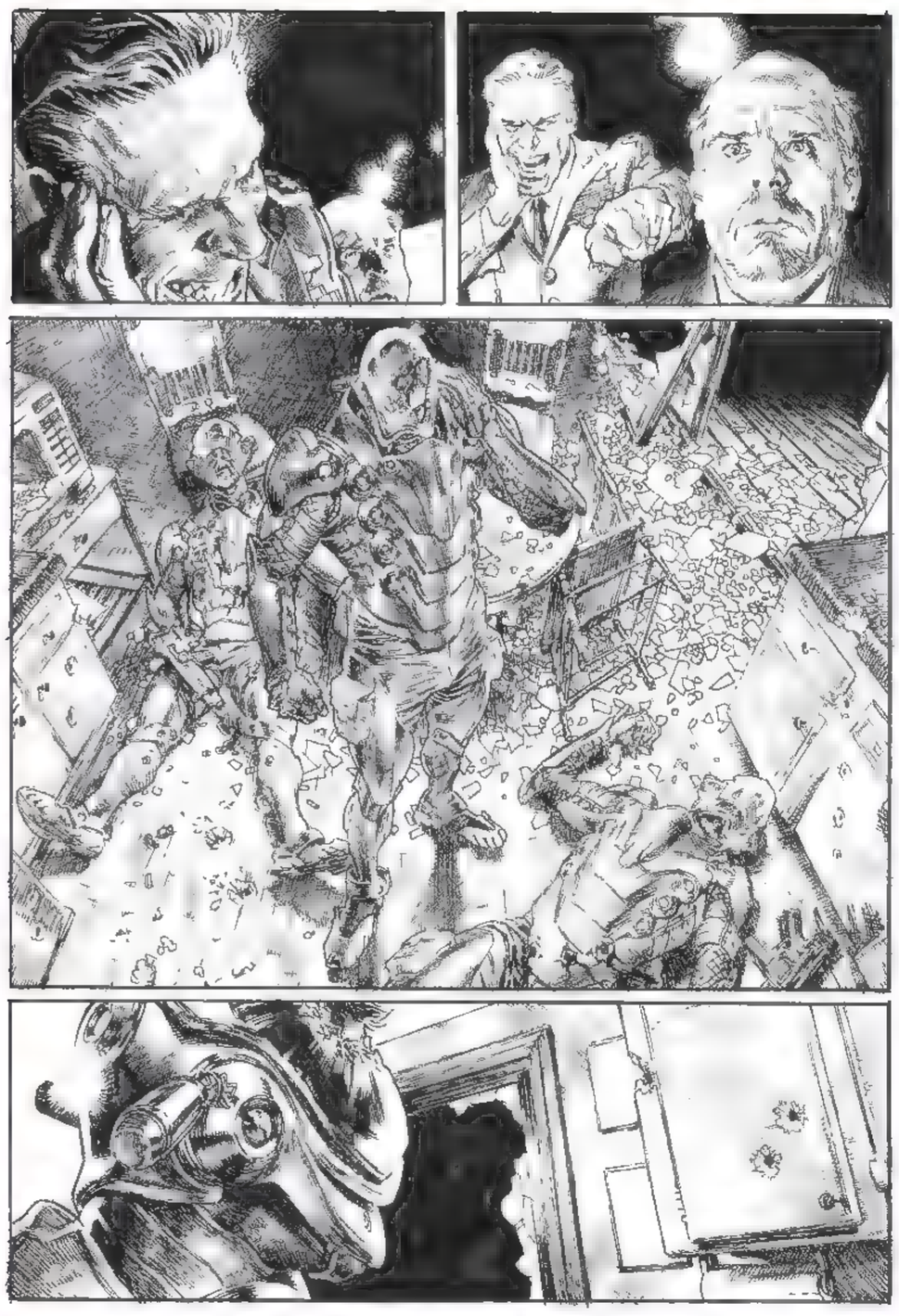


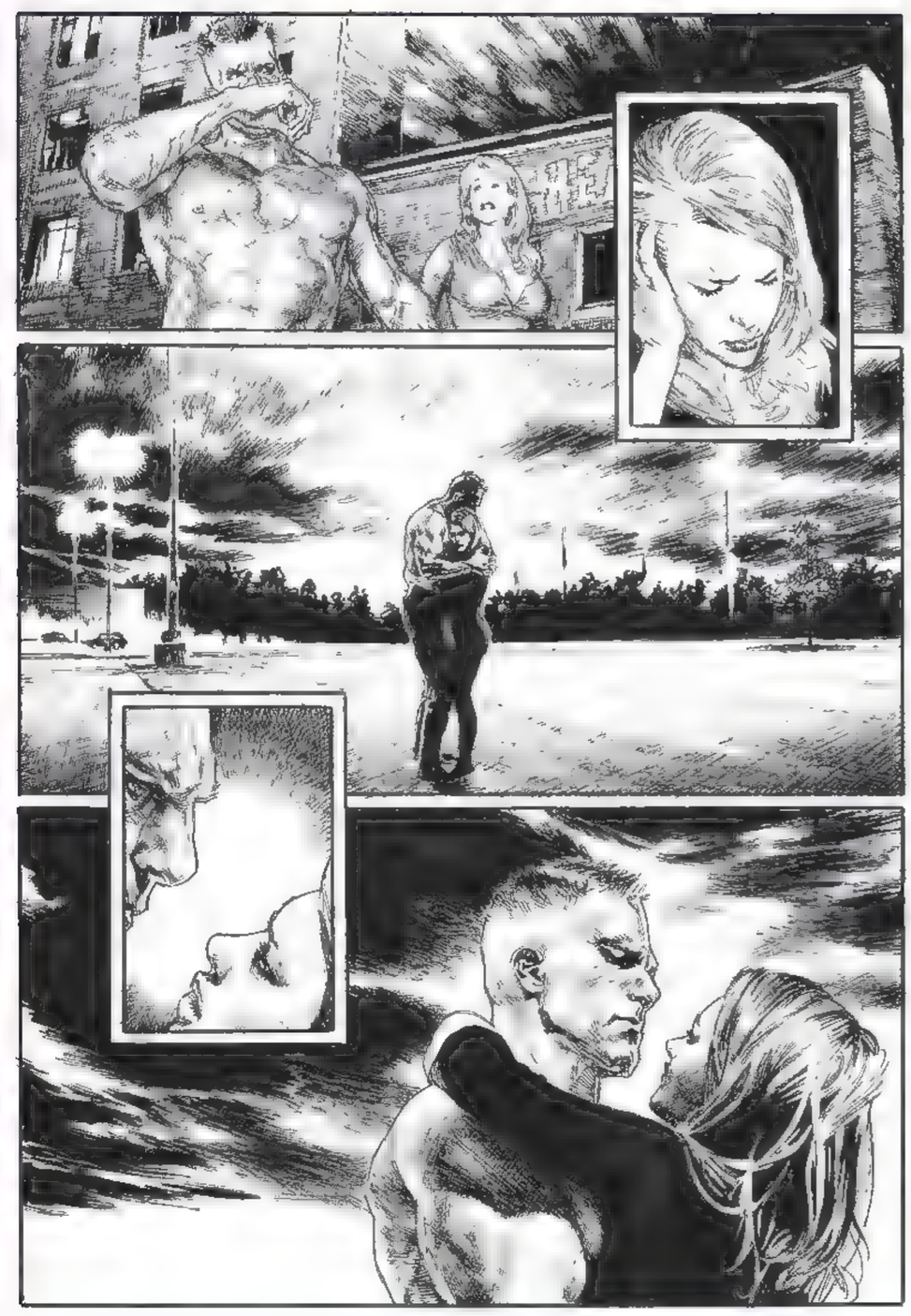
BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" PAGES 8-10
Art by LEWIS LAROSA

BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" p.11
Art by LEWIS LAROSA

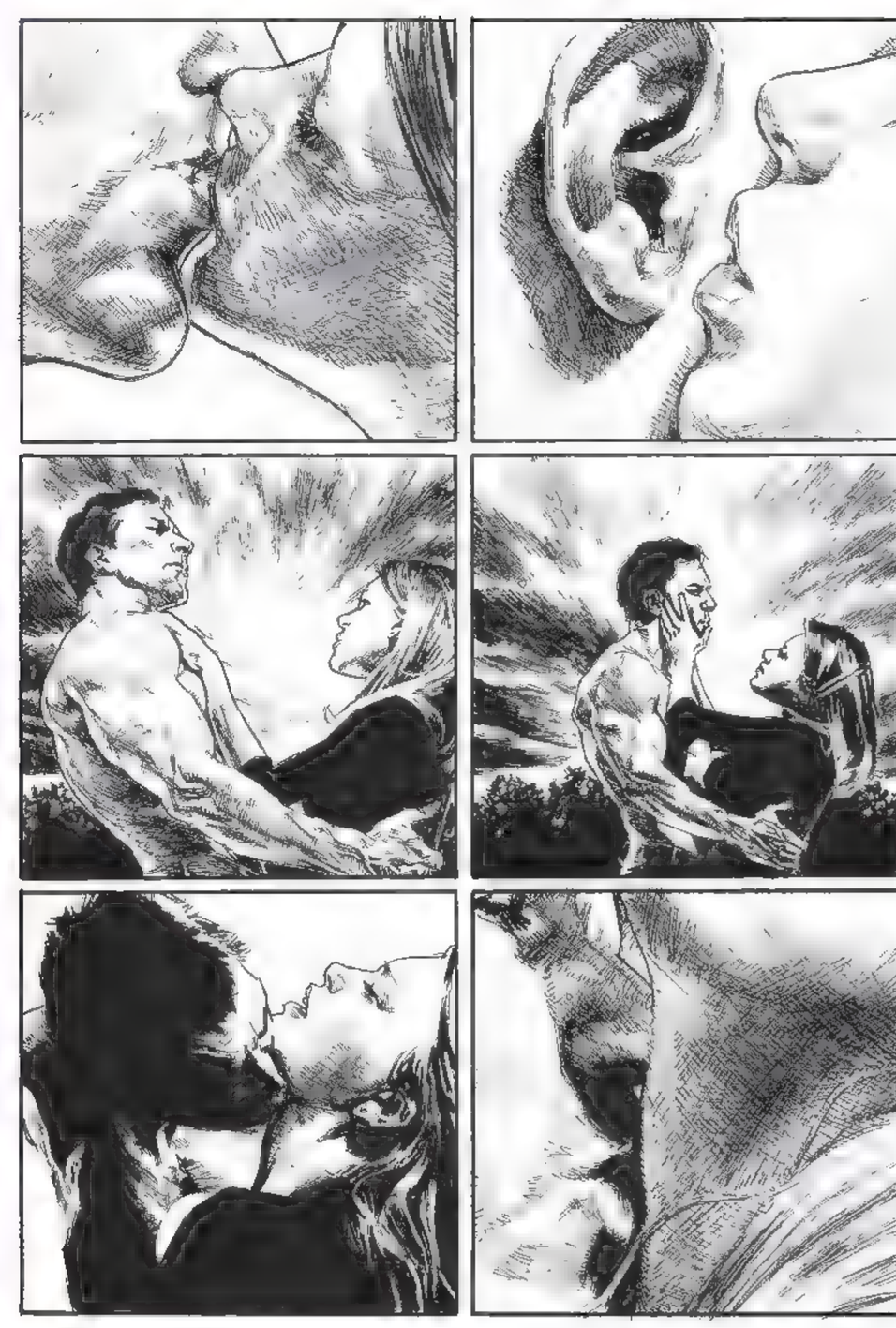
BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" p.12
Art by LEWIS LAROSA

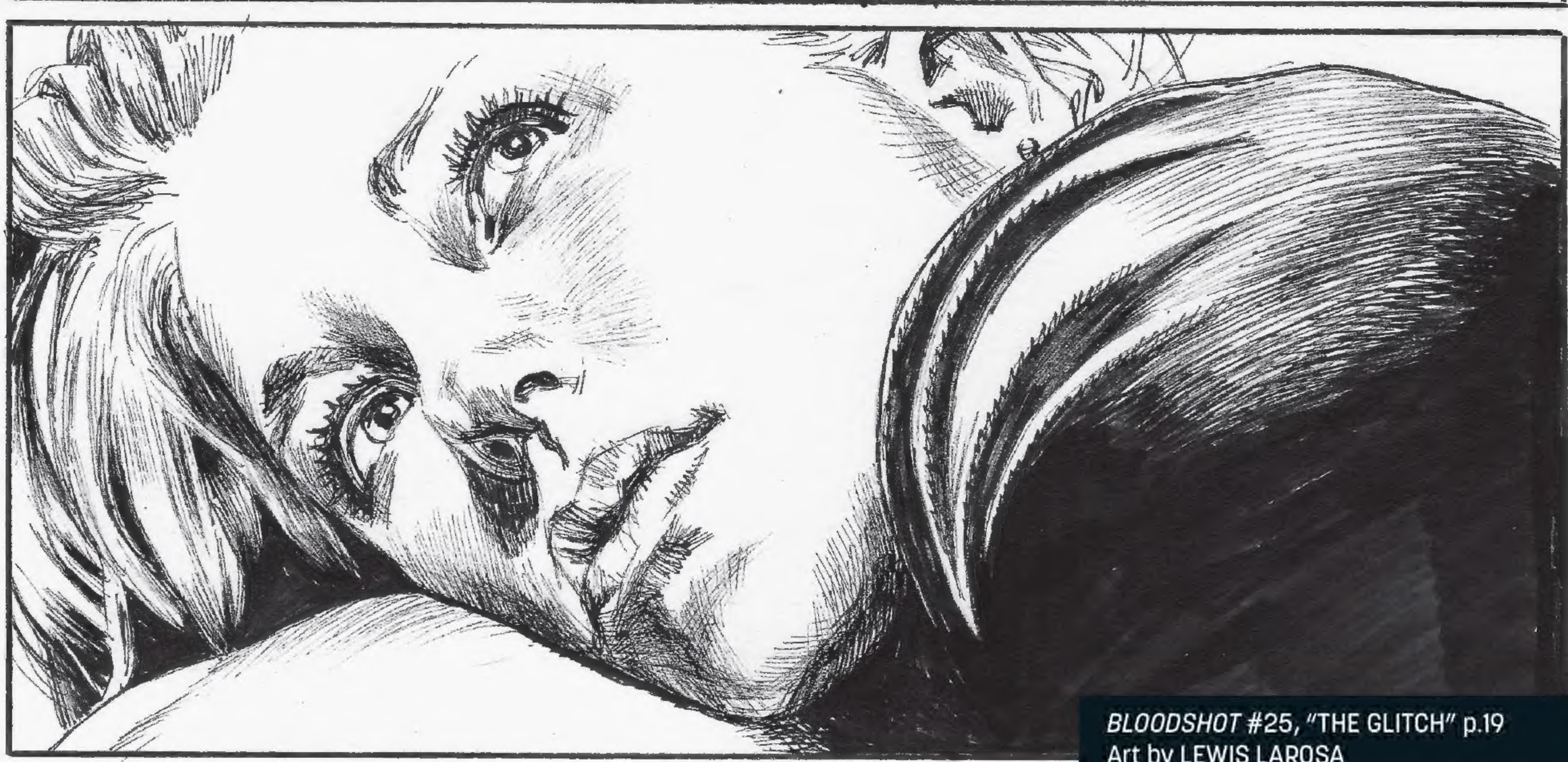
BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" PAGES 13-15
Art by LEWIS LAROSA



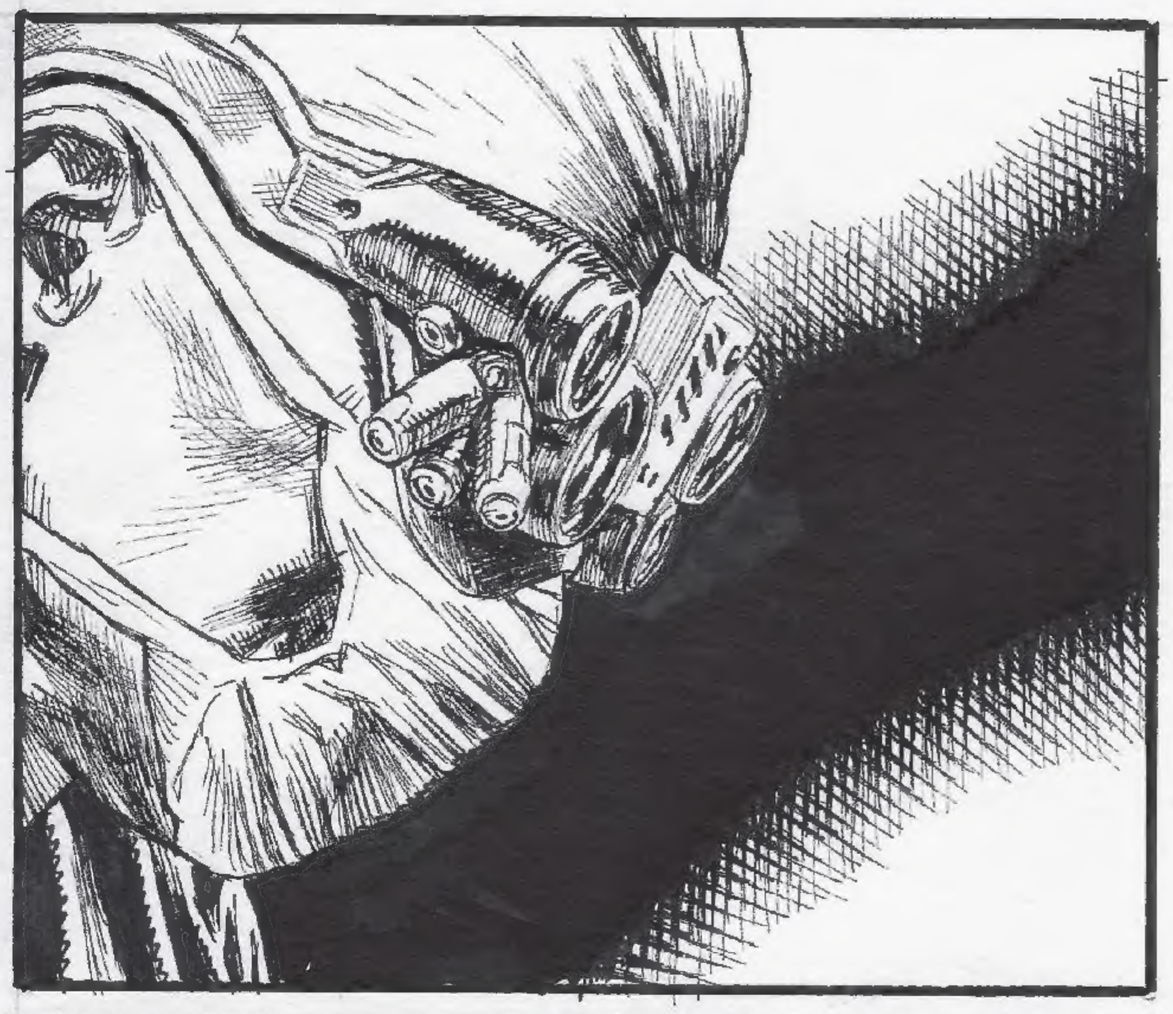


BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" PAGES 16-18
Art by LEWIS LAROSA





BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" p.19
Art by LEWIS LAROSA



BLOODSHOT #25, "THE GLITCH" p.22
Art by LEWIS LAROSA

EVERY MISSION... IS SOMEONE'S LAST.

"Absolutely amazing... You won't be disappointed." – IGN

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Bloodshot has just joined the Harbinger Active Resistance Division – the black-budget, technologically augmented strike force where the powers are dangerously unstable and every mission is a one-way ticket into the meat grinder. With a reluctant leader calling the shots and a crop of untested rookies manning the frontline, Bloodshot is about to take the H.A.R.D. Corps on a brutal, globe-spanning cavalcade of missions against the Harbinger Foundation, rogue Project Rising Spirit operators, and the conspiracy-smashing duo of Archer & Armstrong. It's a gasoline-drenched, synapse-snapping suicide run where no one is safe... and heroes always die trying.

Acclaimed writers Christos Gage, Joshua Dysart, Matt Kindt, and Peter Milligan join an all-star cast of artists – including Emanuela Lupacchino, Howard Chaykin, Bart Sears, Lewis LaRosa, and more – for the explosive final act of Bloodshot's smash-hit ongoing series. Collecting BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS #14-23, BLOODSHOT #24-25, BLOODSHOT #0, BLOODSHOT AND H.A.R.D. CORPS: H.A.R.D. CORPS #0, and ARCHER & ARMSTRONG #18-19 from Valiant superstars Fred Van Lente and Pere Pérez, as well as 20+ pages of rarely seen bonus materials and special features!

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